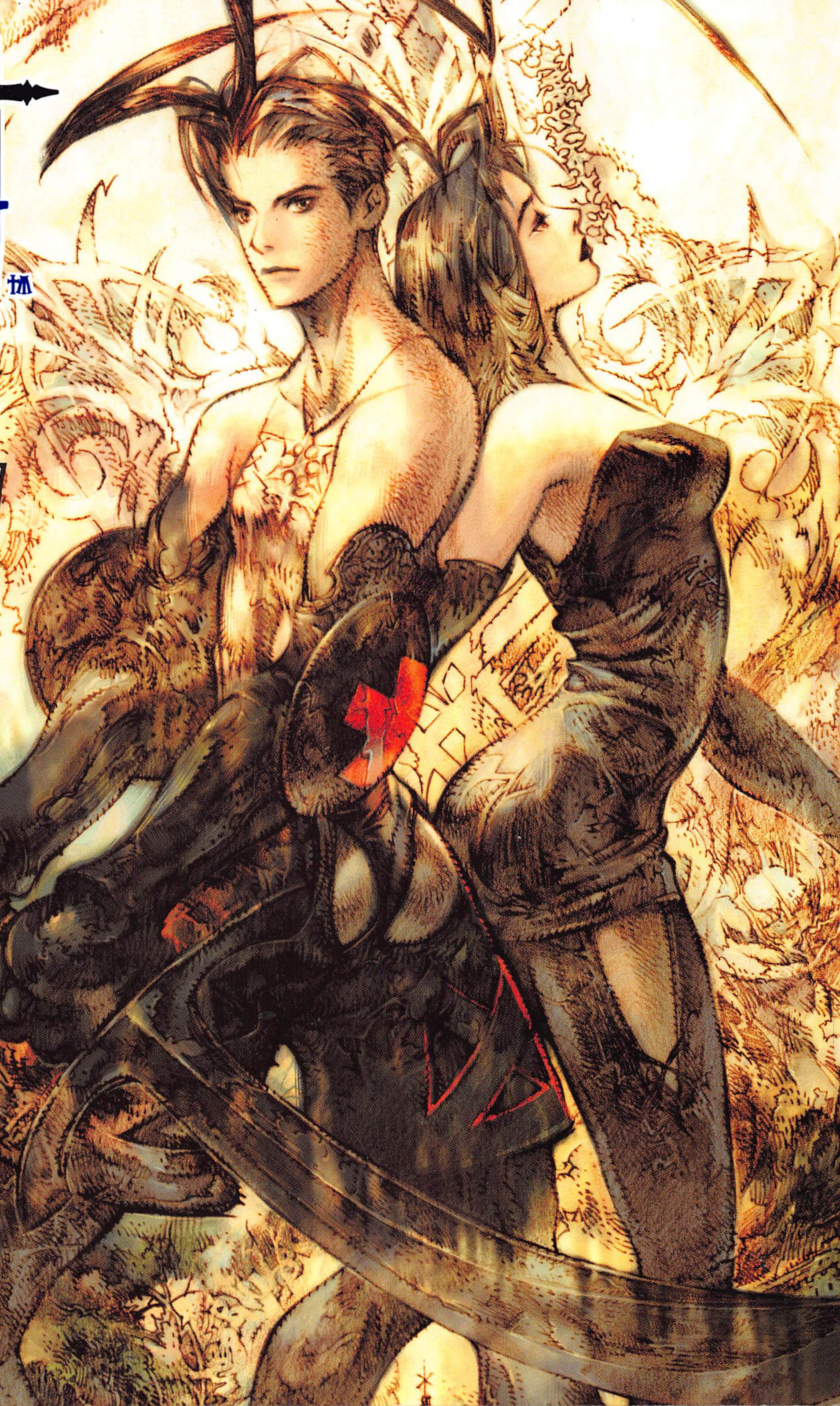
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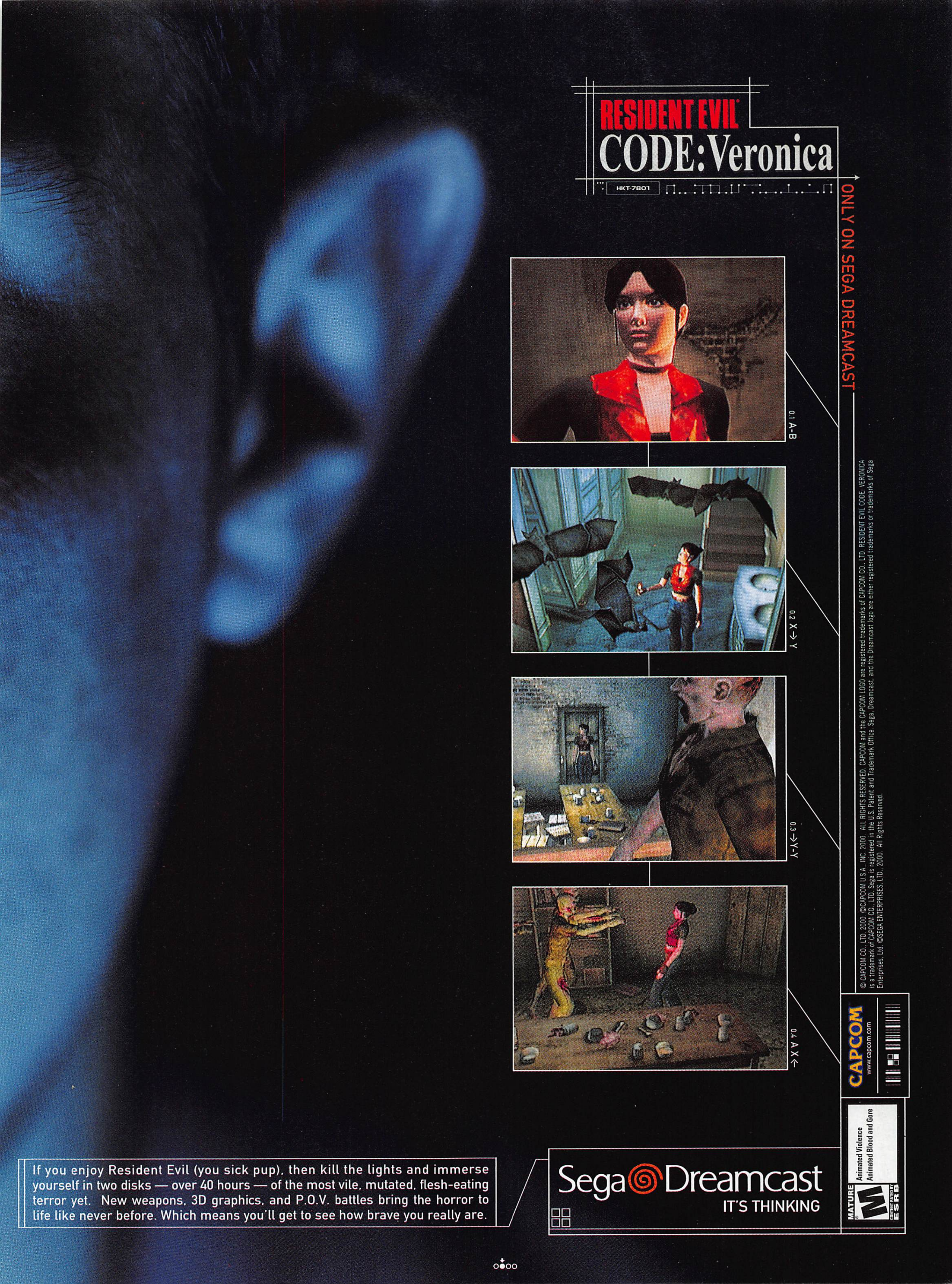
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Where has the innovation gone? This nasty little topic (and the seemingly complete lack of it on the PC 'platform') comes up more than once a month, any time I get into a heated debate with one of our more PC-friendly editors. After all, if you pay even a little attention to the PC gaming scene, you'll notice that it's virtually dominated by three genres: first-person shooters, real-time strategy games and RPGs (the American kind, **not** the Japanese brand—Interplay's bread and butter). Sure, there are lots of other types, but the sales charts are invariably clogged with these three categories, as are the sheer number of games in development. Of course, he's keen to point out that console games are typically dominated by three genres as well: fighting games, racing games and 3D platformers. I have to admit (begrudgingly, of course) that he has a point... But the problem is that we're both right. Even when companies 'innovate' these days, they usually come out with nothing more than an extension of an existing genre... there simply aren't any more original ideas. AH! But could we both be wrong? Could the nature of this shortage be something more insidious? Could it be the simple fact that gamers don't want original games—but rather, countless inane re-hashes?

People just don't like things that are new and different, things a little off the beaten path... It holds true for everything, from movies to music to books, and unfortunately, it's true for games as well. Independent movies, music and games don't get much more than passing glances save from small, fanatically hard-core audiences—and as soon as these 'cult' fans are finished with them, they're off to sweep up the latest copy of *Tekken* or *Tomb Raider*. At the same time, if someone has the temerity to come up with even a marginally original game, everybody's on it faster than you can say "monster breeding sim." This may generate a meager amount of creativity within a genre, but unfortunately, it does almost nothing to advance gaming as a whole. Heck, games that were considered 'innovative' in the 32-bit era were nothing more than rehashes of older titles, all dressed up for the Nineties. Titles like *Resident Evil (Alone in the Dark)*, *Tomb Raider (Prince of Persia)*, and even *Command & Conquer* (can you say *Herzog Zwei?)* are all huge hits that owe much of their existences to old concepts and ideas—hell, somebody over at Eidos should be cutting Jordan Mechner a huge check. Could it be that we simply don't like anything akin to innovation? Are gamers that much like every other type of consumer...? I'm afraid so.

Truly original games, such as *Tail of the Sun* (or anything Artdink's does, for good or for ill), *Devil Dice*, *Jumping Flash*, etc., have outright failed to generate anything more than critical praise—not completely dissimilar from any number of independent films or 'underground' musicians. I knew that gaming was becoming more Hollywood-like by the second, but it's scary now to notice that, apparently, it's been in force for quite some time...

So to what do we owe these recent revelations? Well, it all came to a head when Nintendo's 64DD recently arrived in the office (let me tell you, these things are harder to come by than a female companion for any one of GameFan's 'eligible' bachelors)—and with it came *Doshin the Giant*. This title, produced by the creator of *Tail of the Sun* (the actual person responsible for the game), is remarkably new and fresh—not a re-hash, not a clone, and certainly nothing with any real ties to anything that's come before.

The trick to *Doshin* is that it's genuinely different. It's not a re-hash of anything, but something totally unique. Sure, it features elements of *Populous* and Artdink's ultra-weird *Tail of the Sun* (again, from the same creator), but those meager surface similarities do little justice to what lies beneath. This is a game of intricate depth (even if it looks completely silly)! But even if Nintendo has the courage to release this game here (on cart, naturally), it begs the question: "will anybody even remotely care?" Sadly, I think not. Games that are this creative, this inventive and this original are simply, repeatedly shunned (even by critics, thus far) for whatever new and hot's coming down the line. Yet, shockingly (or not), I'd go so far as to say I'm more excited about this game than *any* of the PS2 launch titles. Am I crazy? Maybe I am... Maybe we should only play retread after 'me too'-like retread. After all—what's the point of creativity? Why bring anything new to the table when it's much easier to copy than to invent? Am I bitter? Does anybody remember Morton Downey, Jr.? Rookie...

I guess there's not much more to say. As a final note: I was recently engaged in a conversation with one of the GF Online staffers, and he made a good point in all of this talk about originality and horrid sequel-itis: "When it comes right down to it, I don't want sequels to games I don't like—but if I'm a fan, let the innovation cease!" It was a telling statement—and something that bears the sad ring of truth...

Editorial Director
Eric Mylonas

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 8, Issue 5 May 2000

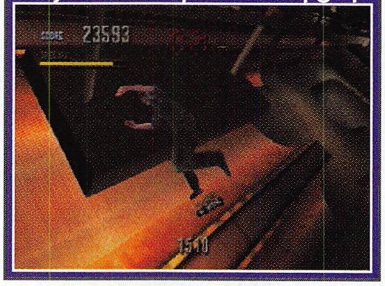
COVER STORY



Cover Art By Akihiko Yoshida, courtesy Squaresoft











GAME INDEX



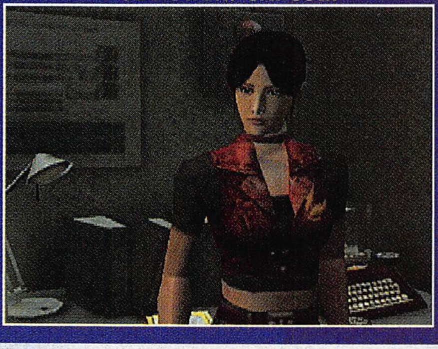
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PlayStation

TOP TEN MOST WANTED

May 2000

RE: Code Veronica

Publisher: Capcom



Reader's Top Ten

1) *Crazy Taxi* - DC
2) *Pokemon Stadium* - N64
3) *NFL 2K* - DC
4) *Gran Turismo 2* - PS
5) *Mario Party 2* - N64
6) *Syphon Filter 2* - PS
7) *Crash Team Racing* - PS
8) *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* - PS
9) *NBA 2K* - DC
10) *RE3 Nemesis* - PS

Crazy Taxi



Reader's Most Wanted

1) *RE: Code Veronica* - DC
2) *DOA2* - DC
3) *Tekken Tag Tourn.* - PS2
4) *Gran Turismo 2000* - PS2
5) *Zelda: Mask Of Mujala* - N64
6) *Ridge Racer V* - PS2
7) *Shen Mue* - DC
8) *Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2* - PS2
9) *Vagrant Story* - PS
10) *Powerstone 2* - DC

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN

*IMPORT TITLE

ECM



1) *Doshin the Giant** - 64DD
2) *Vagrant Story* - PS
3) *Dracula X** - Turbo Duo
4) *Raiden Fighters Jet 2** - Arcade
5) *Gunbird 2* - Arcade
6) *Crazy Taxi* - DC
7) *Powerstone* - DC
8) *Speedball 2100* - PS
9) *Psychic Warlock Taromaru** - SS
10) *Chaos Engine* - Amiga CD 32

Kodomo



1) *RE: Code Veronica** - DC
2) *Crazy Taxi* - DC
3) *Unreal Tournament* - PC
4) *Vagrant Story** - PS
5) *Wipeout 3* - PS
6) *VOOT** - DC
7) *Ridge Racer 64* - N64
8) *Dead or Alive 2* - DC
9) *Strider 1 & 2** - PS
10) *Ridge Racer 4* - PS

Cerberus



1) *Unreal Tournament* - PC
2) *Tekken Tag Tourn.** - PS2
3) *Ridge Racer V** - PS2
4) *Goonies II* - NES
5) *Armored Core: MoA* - PS
6) *Vagrant Story* - PS
7) *Gondomania* - Arcade
8) *Rabbit Punch* - Arcade
9) *Racing Jam* - Arcade
10) *Battletoads* - Arcade

Eggo



1) *Samba de Amigo** - Arcade
2) *Strikers 1945 2** - SS
3) *Ristar* - Genesis
4) *Soukyugurentai** - SS
5) *Ridge Racer V** - PS2
6) *Dracula X** - PC Engine
7) *Typing of the Dead** - Arcade
8) *Seiken Densetsu** - SFam
9) *Vagrant Story** - PS
10) *David's Midnight Magic* - C64

Fury



1) *Crazy Taxi* - DC
2) *Sega GT** - DC
3) *Radiant Silvergun** - SS
4) *Doshin the Giant** - 64DD
5) *Dead or Alive 2* - DC
6) *Virtual On: OT** - DC
7) *RE: Code Veronica** - DC
8) *SF III W Impact** - DC
9) *Speed Punks* - PS
10) *Berserk** - DC

Judge



1) *EverQuest* - PC
2) *Unreal Tournament* - PC
3) *1602 A.D.* - PC
4) *MediEvil 2* - PS
5) *Syphon Filter 2* - PS
6) *All-Star Baseball* - N64
7) *Soldier of Fortune* - PC
8) *Triple Play 2001* - PS
9) *Worms: Armageddon* - PC
10) *RE: Code Veronica** - DC

WIN

THE GAME SYSTEM OF YOUR CHOICE! ENTER TODAY!

All you have to do to enter the drawing is write down a list of your top 10 favorite games and the 10 games you want the most that aren't out yet, on a piece of paper or a postcard then send them to: GAMEFAN TOP TEN, 6301 DeSoto Ave., Suite E, Woodland Hills, CA 91367

First Prize: GameBoy Color

Second Prize: Your choice of one of the Picks of the Month in Viewpoint.

Third Prize: A FREE year of GameFan! The best magazine in the universe!

Congratulations to last month's winners:

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Glen Ullin, ND	Baton Rouge, LA	Cocoa Beach, FL

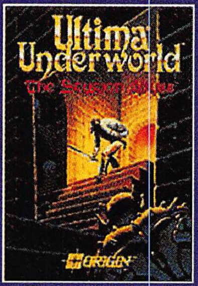
Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self-addressed & stamped envelope.

Developer's Top Ten

This Month's Guest:
Jason Hough
Game Designer, Zono, Inc.

1. *Ultima Underworld* - PC
2. *System Shock* - PC
3. *Elite* - PC
4. *Below The Root* - PC
5. *Rescue Raiders* - PC
6. *Baldur's Gate* - PC
7. *Counterstrike (Half-Life)* - PC
8. *Quake CTF* - PC
9. *Dungeon Master* - PC
10. *Everquest* - PC

Ultima Underworld



Publisher: EA/Origin

"*Ultima Underworld* was the first and only game I've ever played from start to finish without playing anything else in the same time period. It's still the most immersive and engrossing RPG I've ever played. Warren Spector is my hero! And a close second really, is *System Shock*. It had all the same great qualities as *Underworld* but in a totally different setting. Warren does it again! *EverQuest* stands as the best of the online RPG's so far. And I think it's only the tip of the iceberg. One of my all time favorite gaming moments was participating in a 200-player raid on the human city."


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EDITOR ROUNDUP

Just weeks before the launch of the PlayStation 2, the office is abuzz with talk of the upcoming system and its enormous game library in the first month. With that many games to choose from, there's at least one title for everybody. So we chose a single PS2 game which most embodies each staff member's taste and wrote about it.

ecm@gamefan.com



ECM

ECM is looking forward to Sony's upcoming *Dark Cloud*, a city-building RPG which satiates his desire to be a Creator, omnipotent ruler of all, and adventurer. Although we all think he likes it because the name of the game matches his... 'cheery' demeanor.

ghiggins@gamefan.com



THE JUDGE

We don't know where he gets the time (there are only eight hours in a 'work' day), but The Judge logs literally hundreds of hours in simulations like *Pirates Gold!*, *Civilization 2*, and *EverQuest* (a virtual life sim). But if he so much as reaches for *A6*, we must stop him.

eggo@gamefan.com



EGGO

A big-time *Dragon Force* fan, Eggo found the *Braveheart*-like scenes of slaying in *Kessen* highly entertaining—watching legions of men perish in seconds, much like his chances of getting a date when he boasts to the ladies that he works for a videogame magazine.

fury@gamefan.com



FURY

A huge car enthusiast and fan of arcade-style racers like *Sega Rally 2*, it's a given that Fury will ooze over *Ridge Racer V*, running at a very-easy-on-the-eyes 60 FPS. The next step in his passage to manhood? Learning to drive with Manual Transmission!

cerberus@gamefan.com



CERBERUS

This formerly blue-haired fool (what else would you call someone who listens to *Sailor Moon* and the *Varsity Blues* soundtrack) will dance the night away with *Stepping Selection*, provided we don't string him up first for blaring his awful music over the intercom.

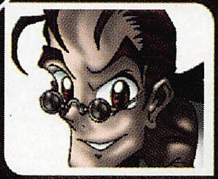


THE 6th MAN

He always seems to champion games that nobody else cares about, so we can see the 6th Man adding *Driving Emotion Type-S* to his gaming library alongside greatest hits such as *Racing Lagoon*, *Cardinal Syn*, *Superman 64*, and *Eggs of Steel*.

THE ART DEPARTMENT

reubus@gamefan.com



REUBUS

A *Gran Turismo* veteran, Reubus lost countless hours of his life upgrading and racing cars in the first two *GT*'s. The mere mention of *GT 2000* has him giddy with glee (i.e., when he's not playing *Unreal Tournament*).

waka@gamefan.com



WAKA

Waka loves his Enix games and with *0 Story* coming out, that'll be the closest he ever gets to touching a Japanese girl since he's married... <cue maniacal laughter, fading into the distance>

tao@gamefan.com



TAO

Tao, who is far too poor to afford a Japanese PS2, is still playing *Monster Rancher 2* on the PS. Who knows? By the time he gets bored with it, *MR3* might just be out on PS2 at an affordable price.

PRODUCTIVITY KILLER OF THE MONTH



WASSSUP!!!

Height: 3.6 in.
Weight: n/a
Blood Type: B-
Special Abilities: WAASSSSSUUUUPPP!!!!!

Who can forget the Super Bowl commercial:

"So wassup, B?"
"Watchin' the game, havin' a bud..."
"True... true."
"Wassup??"
"WASSSUPPP!!!"
"WAAAAASSSSSSSUUUPPP!?!?!?!?!?!?!" ad nauseaum.

When the Cartoon Network Superfriends spoof found its way onto the Net and into our office, it had us rolling in the aisles in seconds. The entire staff was in tears... only a foreshadowing of the events to come. Within hours, Wassup-mania had spread, with editors calling back and forth across the cave, "WAAASSSSSAAAAPPP!!!!"... "WazzzzuuuuuuuuP???"... "WHAAAAAAAASAAAP!!!!"

You could picture office productivity like a car, teetering on the brink of a cliff, about to fall over... It got especially bad when The Judge and Eggo set their ICQ sounds as different Wassup!'s and started messaging each other back and forth. What a bunch of immature 'grown-ups' we all are... "True... True..."

This month in GameFan's BOX-O-FUN!



Tribute to Heihachi

We are gathered here today to remember an old friend... a console who gave his life for the good of the magazine and our readers... Heihachi may be gone, but his memory will never be forgotten. This brave Japanese PlayStation has been with us since day one, when *Toshinden* first lit up TV screens at *GameFan*. Ever since then, Heihachi (so named because of the sticker on his lid) has served us well, dutifully grabbing only the finest screenshots for our reviews and previews.

Countless import games have been read by his hallowed laser, and multiple games have tried to break his spirit with excessive load times... but through it all, he persisted, never giving up or breaking down... watching helplessly as his grey, first generation brothers fell in the line of duty (the *Biohazard* doors claimed many a PlayStation).

This loyal console has seen it all: outliving almost the entire staff at GameFan, surviving terrifying multiple disc swap methods, upside-down & 45-degree contortions... yet not once did Heihachi complain... not once did he fail to get us past the crystal sounds of the black PlayStation bootup screen. Rarely do you see dedication to this degree.

Yet time is a relentless opponent, and with each new import game in the past year, slowly but surely the skipping became more frequent. Until finally, in the midst of a triple bypass disc swap for *Suikoden II*, Heihachi spun no more...

In memory of Heihachi the PlayStation (1995-2000), who is survived by the upcoming Kazuya, the PlayStation 2.

CHICKEN OF THE MONTH

Swingin' Sammy Sosa



If you remember, last month's coveted Chicken of the Month (i.e., free goodie sent to us by a game company) was the rockin' *Tomba 2* piggy bank. While Sony was kind enough to send us many of these banks, the demand was so high that not every editor got one... resulting in a devastatingly cut-throat clamoring for *Tomba 2* piggy banks. The end result? Creative bargaining and... <gasp> Chicken Bartering (kids, do not try this at home)!

At one point, a single *Tomba 2* piggy bank went for as high as this very cool, head-bobbing Sammy Sosa figurine, courtesy of 3DO in promotion of *Slammin' Sammy Sosa Softball* (try sayin' that three times quickly). Yes, his head bobs back and forth and he... umm, stands there... lookin' cool with his head-bobbling. Cmon, it's Sammy Sosa, and it's gotta be worth something equivalent to a hip piggy bank, right?

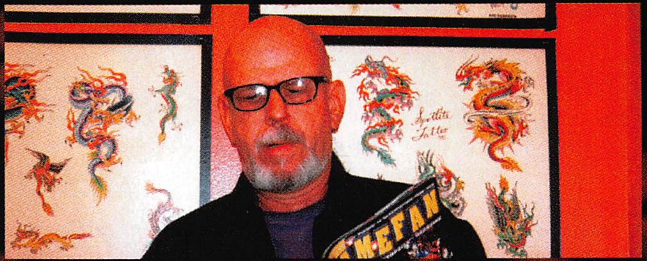
SAUSAGE OF THE MONTH



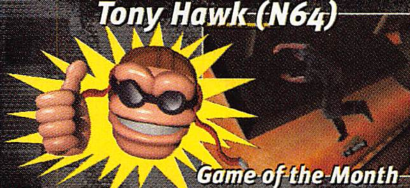
When you think of SotM, what comes to mind? A pimply faced geek with braces, buried nose-deep in the latest gaming mag? Bet you didn't think of: the world-famous Bob Roberts, "the King of Rock 'n' Roll Tattooing" by day... and 'Ninja Gamer' by night.

This 54-year-old owner of Spotlite Tattoo can boast of designing and tattooing the *Stray Cats* logo on Brian Setzer, **and** beating the Double Eggplant Wizard in *Kid Icarus* on NES. He can go on at length about hard-core games in 8-bit (*Blaster Master, Adventures of LoLo*), 16-bit (*Zelda, Chrono Trigger, Ogre Battle*), 32-bit (*FF Tactics, Star Ocean 2, Medal of Honor*), 64-bit (*Turok 1 & 2, Zelda, Banjo*), and 128-bit (*Sonic, Evolution*). Bob Roberts, we salute you!

What did Bob do to get published in *GameFan*? Simple, he just sent his hard-core story and picture to Posty's mailing address. Think you've got what it takes to be our Sausage of the Month?



VIEWPOINT


Tony Hawk (N64)
Game of the Month


ECM


Cerberus


Eggo


Fury

G — Graphics
C — Control
P — Play Mechanics
M — Music
O — Originality



Alundra 2
PlayStation
Activision
Action RPG
Reviewed page 36

Initially I was a bit skeptical of *Alundra 2*. After all, I wasn't a huge fan of the first one and I'm not exactly the biggest fan of games getting the royal hack job as they move from 2D to 3D. However, A2 is fun. Sure, the 3D engine is anemic (another case of 3D claiming a developer) but it's the story and gameplay that'll suck you in. And while I'm not sure it's a good thing that the Looney Tunes-style cut-scenes are the biggest draw, it certainly makes for an amusing experience.

G 5 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 — **83**

Wow, I don't think I've agreed this much with Cerberus since my Pepsi Man viewpoint... though in all honesty I'd prefer to forget that incident. Heard of the saying, "If it ain't broke don't fix it"? The first Alundra was a decent RPG and now this? No pretty 2D art and no hard puzzles (ok, maybe I don't mind that one quite as much). Fact is, the PlayStation's RPG waters are overflowing and *Alundra 2* simply can't compete... *Valkyrie*, anyone?

G 6 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 6 — **73**

The formula's been changed and I'm not very happy. I enjoyed *Alundra* because it was a traditional RPG. Sure, there wasn't much to separate it from everything else out there, but at least it had some decent looking 2D art. While the art style here is generally pretty nice looking it doesn't translate well to polygons. *Alundra II* proves to be another instance in the "if you've gotta have everything" philosophy. I, my friends, will wait for *Valkyrie Profile*.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 6 — **80**



Armored Core: MoA
PlayStation
Agetec
Mech Combat

I will never get enough of well-done mission-based, mech games (no, the *Gundam* games don't count), and *Armored Core MoA2* is the best one yet. If you played through and loved *Gun Griffon* or any of the other AC games you owe it to yourself to take From Software's latest for a spin. Solid graphics, good control (but still no analog 'look' function?!)—be warned though, this game is not for those looking for a *VOOT* substitute.

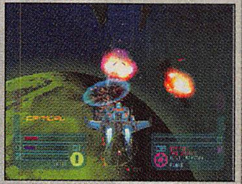
G 7 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **87**

Every time a new *Armored Core* game comes out, I play it and try to like it, and every time, I come away frustrated, with a bad taste in my mouth. The mission mode in *Master of Arena* is a perfect example. What is this? *Armored Raider?* Wander around till you find the right outpost to blow up to unlock the door so I can proceed with my boring adventure? No thanks. *Armored Core 2* on PS2 looks better... but I am not holding my breath.

G 6 C 6 P 5 M 6 O 6 — **65**

Mechs and missiles—you won't hear me complaining. I've been a huge *Armored Core* fan from day one and *Master of Arena* isn't much different. The game keeps getting better with each addition. Solid, well-designed missions and massive robot mods guarantee much diversity. I don't like that control remains strictly digital, but that's From for you. This is the last one on the PS, *AC2* will appear on the PS2 later this year. *AC:MoA* is the perfect time killer.

G 7 C 8 P 9 M 9 O 8 — **90**



Colony Wars: Red Sun
PlayStation
Psygnosis
Shooter
Reviewed page 32

Mmmm, nothing like a fresh glass of strawberry milk first thing in the morning...please Psygnosis, no more CW games after this one. The genre is dead, beat, finished, kaput and on and on. Listen, the game still resides in the top 5% of PS games graphically, but it STILL suffers from the same issues that plagued CW1&2 and Blast Radius- the game is way too repetitive and the story is less-than-engrossing. I'd rather play Descent Freespace on PC, <sigh>.

G 9 C 8 P 5 M 7 O 4 — **70**

You know what they say, third times the charm and Red Sun does not disappoint...if you don't own CW, CW: Vengeance and Blast Radius that is. Look, this might sound hypocritical considering my love for the Street Fighter series, but what can I say...my pockets are running dry. Now as far as the other CW brethren are concerned, Red Sun is the absolute best—both in a graphics and gameplay sense. And lets not forget the current state of shooters...

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 7 — **91**

Colony Wars is another PlayStation sleeper. Great control, beyond-PlayStation visuals in a super-duper highly adrenal sci-fi world. Like *Armored Core*, each game in the *Colony Wars* series gets progressively better. *Red Sun* is no exception. *Red Sun* is definitely, definitely not for everyone, but most indubitably perfect for shooter, sci-fi and *Colony Wars* aficionados. Grab a Red Bull and your Dual Shock, it's time for take off.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 6 — **90**



Eagle 1 Harrier Attack
PlayStation
Infogrames
Flight Sim

What's this? An actual alternative to Namco's *Ace Combat* series? Well, this must be just great for those that are into console-based flight 'sims,' <snicker>. *Ace Combat* is a decent series of games and the fans (Reubus et al), may derive some enjoyment from this game, but it simply failed to generate one slim iota of passion in me. It looks OK, controls decently but the adrenaline factor is so low, I needed a six pack of Red Bull to keep my pulse from dipping below 40 BPM... *<Zzzzzzzz>*.

G 5 C 5 P 5 M 7 O 7 — **60**

Being a console gamer, I approached this flight sim, *Eagle 1 Harrier*, very cautiously, with low expectations. But lo and behold, the intro actually registered a pulse, the voices were pretty good, the missions seemed interesting. Then the game started. Despite my best efforts, I couldn't get within less than 400m of the enemy. What is this, Midway's *Mortal Kombat* AI? Dull gameplay shoots down any chance this game might've had.

G 6 C 6 P 3 M 7 O 7 — **56**

From a distance, *Eagle 1* might seem appealing with its relatively nice visuals (not *Ace Combat* quality), but at a closer look the pain becomes obvious. And what's with the jump-jet? Attempting to get it to do your bidding is like trying to get Cerberus to stop wasting his money on eBay... it's just not gonna happen. *Ace Combat* fans, stick to your guns cause *Eagle 1* leaves much to be desired. Besides, these ain't good days to fly.

G 7 C 5 P 6 M 7 O 7 — **65**



ECW Hardcore
PlayStation
Acclaim
Wrestling

Wrestling: you either love it or hate it in all its televised glory. I fit in the latter camp, naturally. However, I can appreciate a good wrestling game (*Fire Pro* anybody?) and this game is definitely not what I'd call good... not if I was stranded on a desert isle with no other games to play. What we have here, dear reader, is a last-ditch desperate attempt to bleed the last dregs of profitability from a departed license (WWF, anyone?). Shame on you, Acclaim.

G 5 C 4 P 3 M 5 O 3 — **45**

I thought for sure *ECW* on the N64 was the worst game I'd play this month... I was wrong. The PS version has uglier character models, less animation, and a choppier frame-rate. Combine that with the aforementioned (see my N64 review) horrible gameplay and you have a guaranteed formula for disaster. The awesome intro only saddens me further because it adequately captures the spirit of ECW... whereas the game does not.

G 4 C 6 P 2 M 6 O 6 — **40**

You know things are bad when the character models resemble those found in the "create your own wrestler" mode. After witnessing ECW's powerhouse of an intro, I can NOT understand the going logic. But I'll certainly take a stab at it—bad game on its own merit won't sell, but bad game disguised behind an adrenaline soaked intro will definitely do better. At least the sound effects (compared to the N64 rev) are nice and the amount of options will satisfy most.

G 5 C 6 P 4 M 5 O 7 — **53**

Front Mission 3



Yeah, the game I thought would never come to the US is here. A man can dream and I don't have to no more. Turn-based strategy RPGs are too few and far between and thank Allah that this one is a steamer. The in-thing this year must be mechs and *Front Mission*'s got mechs o' plenty. *Front Mission 3* is the first US release for the series and by far the best. But this still doesn't make up for being assed out of *Tobal 2*...

G 8 C 7 P 9 M 8 O 7 **88**



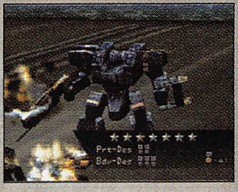
RPGs and strategy games don't generally grab my attention, but when Square announced they were bringing a *FM* game to the states, I was intrigued. Let's face it, mechs are awesome and games like *FM3* and VOOT only stand to reinforce that. While truthfully, the in game graphics don't exactly jump out at ya, the battle sequences (now in real time) definitely make up for any shortcomings. But could you imagine a straight-up *FM* action game? Damn, got drool on my leg.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 6 O 9 **80**



Oh hell, yes! Whereas Square simply dropped the ball on every other chapter in this amazing series, they finally come through big time with the latest edition (by virtue of the fact that they actually brought it out here). While *Front Mission 2* was crippled with the inability to disable the real-time scenes, *FM3* runs quickly enough for this to be more a joy than a stab. All strat game fans need this, and while you're at it Square, where's my *Tactics 2*?

G 8 C 7 P 9 M 7 O 8 **92**



Front Mission 3
PlayStation
Square
Strategy RPG

Road Rash: Jailbreak



I've missed *Road Rash* very much, but for me, the magic of *Road Rash* has worn off. There's nothing too mysterious or magical about driving alongside another driver and bludgeoning him to oblivion when I do it on a daily basis during my commute. I'm really torn apart because for brainless, mindless fun you really can't go wrong with *Road Rash*. There's nothing new or spectacular here, but there are bikes, bad-asses tons of weapons and wanton violence.

G 6 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 7 **75**



Road Rash is the epitome of 'What you see is what you get'-type games: clobbering bad guys on motorcycles, spectacular crashes, and simple 'take your aggressions out,' 'road rage'-like fun. The problem is not much has changed in this series since the 16-bit days, and *Jailbreak* doesn't warrant a purchase, assuming you've played the previous *RR*'s. If the idea of this series sounds new and exciting to you, then rent it first.

G 6 C 6 P 7 M 7 O 4 **68**



This is what I fear over all other things when a company gets hold of a successful idea: Not only do they milk the cow to death, they don't even have the common courtesy to use vaseline while they're doing it. I'd still play Genesis *RR2* over this uninspired road kill, and if you've never played this series before I'd still recommend getting the classic over this rehashed, tired old beast. C'mon EA, you knew what innovation was upon a time...

G 6 C 7 P 6 M 6 O 1 **59**



Road Rash: Jailbreak
PlayStation
Electronic Arts
Racing

RollCage Stage 2



Here's one I never thought I'd see again. Not that the first was bad—not by any means, it's just that I didn't expect *Rollcage* selling more than a few thousand copies here and there. Psygnosis has the cult following on the PlayStation for its racing games to do well as long as the games meet a certain standard. I'll have to agree with Fury that this Rollcage alleviates some of the peeves seen previously. It's no *Wipeout*, but it'll do...

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 9 O 6 **82**



Amazing, I can now play *Rollcage* (competitively mind you!) without encountering the frustrating and disorienting effects the first *Cage* delivered after a crash. What's that, your not familiar with the problematic collision issues of the first game? Feel fortunate you didn't have to endure the pain. What's this, I was in first place and now I'm pointed backwards—who's to blame, I will punish! And the lighting effects? Beautiful, as usual—a Psygnosis trademark.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 **84**



Hallelujah! I can actually play this game now and not want to throw the controller at every other turn in the road. Only problem is, this game is otherwise trademark Psygnosis: blistering visuals, intense sound and, well, boring gameplay. While it's certainly more serviceable than last year's model, I think it's time ATD (the developer) sets its sights on something a little more than Wipeout on the ground. A new *'Morph* game, perhaps?

G 8 C 7 P 5 M 7 O 6 **72**



RollCage Stage 2
PlayStation
Psygnosis
Racing

Runabout 2



Look, more of the same! Well, not really, *Runabout 2* has more than the three levels found in the first game—didn't it feel like shareware? Anyway, there's more shtuff to run into and blow up. I even found a few 18-wheelers to run into. There's not much like this for any console right now so *Runabout 2* stands pretty much alone. My problem justifying *Runabout 2* is that there's so much to play on the grey box and not enough time for it.

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 6 **78**



Does anyone really think I'm going to like this game? C'mon, I'm the guy that parks his Prelude a million miles away from every other car to avoid dents. But seriously, this isn't my type of game. While a little road rage may be fun for a short while, if I wanna go crazy while I'm driving around town I'll stick to *Crazy Taxi*. But I guess for PlayStation owners *Runabout 2* could be a good second-best. It controls well, speedy, too, and there's a lot of pedestrians to run over..

G 7 C 9 P 9 M 6 O 8 **80**



I liked this game the first time around because it was something different, but after experiencing *Crazy Taxi*, this is way below what is now acceptable. I applaud Climax's effort to deliver a more playable title this time around ("Look ma! More than a rental's worth of gameplay!"), but this game really did little to get my blood pumpin.' Perhaps the Dreamcast rev can redeem it somewhat, but I doubt it. Chalk it up to another decent 'racer' on a system choked with them.

G 6 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 7 **74**



Runabout 2
PlayStation
Hot-B
Driving

ECW Hardcore



Let's get something straight here, there's only one wrestling series worth playing and it's published by THQ. *WWF 2000* is fun to play, I like it. But how does this stack up? I don't like wrestling and a bad wrestling game isn't something I'm particularly fond of. *ECW Hardcore* is exactly that, only for the hardcore. Even ECW may take offense to this mess. There's no game here to play, bad everything (from graphics down to control) sums ECW up pretty well.

G 6 C 7 P 5 M 5 O 4 **63**



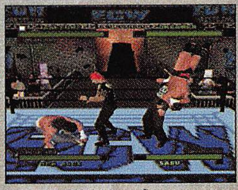
Barbed wire and cheese graters... what the hell is this? This ain't the kind of wrestling I grew up on—where's Captain Lou and Andre the Giant? Dead, Giant's Syndrome you say? Man that's sad... anyhow, ECW has issues... big ones! Animation is painful to observe, control is far from being intuitive or user friendly and the crowd shows about as much life and energy as Eggo does on a daily basis... unless of course his blowup Cactrot's at stake. Bottom line, I'd sooner play Superman 64...

G 6 C 6 P 4 M 3 O 7 **50**



Hey look! A marginal improvement from the PS rev, <shudder>. A better, more playable frame rate certainly doesn't hurt things but it also does little to mask that this game is poor, through and through (independent of hardware platform). While casual gamers continue to snap up *Wrestlemania 2K* at a feverish pace I find it incredibly unlikely that anyone (minus psychotic ECW fans—aren't they all?) will find room for this abomination in their collection.

G 6 C 5 P 4 M 4 O 4 **47**



ECW Hardcore
Nintendo 64
Acclaim
Wrestling
Reviewed page 46

Hydro Thunder



While I love to see stellar titles like *Resident Evil 2* and *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* make their way onto the Fun Machine, some games including *Hydro Thunder* should remain solely on the Dreamcast. Look, it's simple... unless you're going too delve as far into a port as the aforementioned titles, what's the real point? What's that you say... money? No way, Midway would NEVER allow a few million to sway their integrity. Stick to the DC rev!

G 6 C 8 P 7 M 5 O 4 **75**



Seeing someone else play this game, I thought the speed was agonizingly slow. But when I picked up the controller, I didn't notice as much because I was concentrating so hard on the steering, jumping, and turboing. The frame-rate is decent, as are the graphics. It's a fun game if you get into it, but there are many other racers I'd recommend over this: DC *Hydro Thunder* if you can, *Ridge Racer 64, Episode I: Racer*, or *Beetle Adventure Racing*.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 6 O 6 **70**



While the N64 may not be the racing game machine that the PlayStation is (and that's a mild understatement) it still has its fair share of super-fun experiences. While *HT* brings something different to the N64 (water-based racing) I think it's a bit too little, too late. Particularly when you already have the game Eggo mentioned doing donuts on the console better. Still, if you don't have a DC and you must have *HT* at home, well, here it is (how's that for an endorsement?).

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 7 **73**



Hydro Thunder
Nintendo 64
Midway
Racing



South Park Rally
Nintendo 64
Acclaim
Racing

All right Acclaim, this is beginning to get insulting. Have we already forgotten the nasty lessons of the past, when upon a time you continued to foist unplayable drivel on an unassuming public? Apparently not, if you intend to keep churning out trash like *SPR* and *ECW* (both bona fide cash runs). If you have the ability to craft games like *Turok 3*, how on earth can you justify pain such as this? Here's to hoping (praying?) that this month is a giant aberration. If not...

G 6 C 6 P 4 M 6 O 3 — **48**

This is not a good month for Acclaim in my eyes. First the multiple incarnations of the dreaded *ECW*, now this... the worst Kart racer ever. Sounded like a good idea, but the track design is downright confusing and despicable (one wrong turn and you're going the wrong way). Despite my love for all things *South Park* (remember my old character?), stay far away from this non-talking pile of poo. Screw you guys... I'm goin' home.

G 7 C 7 P 3 M 8 O 6 — **41**

Strangely, the low brow humor of *South Park* still captivates me (which is rare considering my short attention span—don't even ask me how I managed a whole season of *Twin Peaks*). But what the heck happened here? I mean *SP 64* and *Chef's Luv Shack* were pretty cool and *Rally* only looked to add to the mix... boy was I wrong! And what's with these busted courses, cart games should always have defined routes... not open ended nonsense. I'll pass.

G 6 C 6 P 4 M 5 O 5 — **55**



Tony Hawk Pro Skater
Nintendo 64
Activision
Skating
Reviewed page 48

I love *Top Skater*, *Tony Hawk* PS and the venerable *Skate or Die* and *720*. That being said, this is a solid port of the PS title from some months ago. Only thing is, the control doesn't feel as precise. Blame the N64 D-pad (don't even try the analog) or that the game didn't get quite enough tweaking but it does make the game a notch less playable than its forebear. Add in the fact that the graphics, over all, aren't as solid and you have a good but not great, game.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 9 — **89**

Considering this is the N64 we're talking about, there are no other skateboarding games at the moment, and fortunately for game-starved N64 owners, this is the best skateboarding title on the market. The only drawback compared to the PS version is the music has taken a hit. Other than that, you've got a sweet looking and great playing skateboarding game that's sure to sell. I'm just not enamored with skateboarding as much as before.

G 9 C 9 P 7 M 7 O 8 — **87**

Sure, I never got to a point in my brief skating career where steel pins had to be inserted in my knees, but I was hardcore... I could ollie, man! OK, so skating wasn't exactly my forte, but with *THPS* I can finally go ballz-out while maintaining a straight vertebrae. What we've got here is the PS version with no loading and some washed out tunes—but they're in there, and that's a feat in itself! Textures look clean as expected and the control is TOPS!

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 9 — **93**



Roadsters
Dreamcast
Titus
Racing
Reviewed page 56

"Bring your tired, huddled masses to DC!" That, my friends, is the current slogan over at Sega 3rd party development. Now I don't know about you, but I'm sick to death (after nary 6 months and change) of PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and PC ports of poor to average titles to DC. *Roadsters* is yet another in this shambling mess. Sure, they say it isn't a straight port but in this case, I'd have been happier with a hi-res port of the N64 game. But at least we didn't get an 'improved' *Superman*, right?

G 5 C 4 P 3 M 5 O 5 — **51**

Cruis'n with better graphics? This racer joins the multitude of other blase DC racers which have decent graphics, a high frame-rate, and are about as fun as running across America... barefoot, with a refrigerator strapped to your back. The feeling of speed is lacking; collision physics are horrible; character voices are poor; and there's simply no incentive to keep playing. Toss this one back, and try waiting for something better.

G 6 C 6 P 5 M 4 O 6 — **53**

ew, yuk...This is pathetic, Titus should be ashamed that Dream Roadster on the N64 is actually better than this manure. The courses lack any thing that would make them fun, the cars, although authentic models, aren't even licensed and control isn't what I'd exactly call realistic. I don't expect every game to be a Super GT or Sega Rally, but I do expect every racing game on the Dreamcast to have better physics than Namco's Pole Position. Sub par.

G 5 C 5 P 4 M 6 O 5 — **60**



Wild Metal
Dreamcast
Take 2
Action

The two 'gamers' to my right are, well, idiots. After all, who wants something a little different, dare I say original? Not these two, that's for sure. The one-player mode is pretty blah, but the multi-player game is real-time, 3D *Worms*. Confused? You won't be once you fire this game up and an entire afternoon is consumed by the gaming gods at DMA. Those with short attention spans or no gaming skill need not apply (Eggo and Fury et al). Now for a *Body Harvest* follow-up...

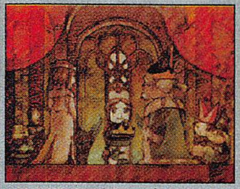
G 7 C 8 P 9 M 6 O 9 — **90**

DMA is a good company, but even good companies make mistakes, which is what *Wild Metal* is. It looks alright visually, but the gameplay is too slow-paced to hold my interest for very long. Add to that the fact that it's a tank game (read, that slow pace just doubled), and you have one of the biggest snore-fests this side of Reubus telling us about "When I used to live in Hollywood..." I would rather play the faster-paced *Battletanx*.

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 6 O 8 — **60**

Finally, a new DMA title and it's not even a sequel to *Body Harvest*... is there no justice in the world? While I love tank games, *Wild Metal* doesn't even compare to the non-stop excitement found in *BattleTanx: Global Assault*. And truthfully, the mission objectives and overall action is a tad on the weak side... and where did my snappy music go? Fact is, DMA can do better and especially on the DC! Worst of all... it's yet another port of a mediocre game.

G 7 C 6 P 7 M 5 O 8 — **64**



Popolocrois II
PlayStation Import
Shogun Rocket
RPG
Reviewed page 74

I'm not a big fan of playing import RPGs (the only one I've ever played entirely through is Game Arts' *Grandia*, <smiles>) but I've made another exception with *Popolocrois 2*. Needless to say, if you don't know Japanese or don' have a handy translator (hey Waka, could you come here for the thousandth time), you're well-advised to step back, but the storybook visuals and super-cool music may certainly make you think twice.

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 8 — **87**

Ahh yes, my old friend 2D. How ya been buddy, Sony treating you well? Anyhow, *Popolocrois* is a return to the simple days of RPG gaming... and it's a welcome one at that! No fancy CG here, just good ol' cartoony art and some pretty cute character designs. Hmm, I wonder if Shidoshi's got this one in his collection? Sadly though, 2D graphics and some lighthearted gameplay might not be enough in *Valkyrie's* wake.

G 8 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 8 — **82**

No matter how much I tell myself that 3D is great, I really miss the bygone 16-bit era. *Popolocrois* doesn't seem as serious as the *Star Oceans* and *Dragoons* of the world, but that's because it isn't. Aside from the spoken dialogue and CD audio *Popolocrois* screams SNES. Sadly, I really can't recommend a purchase on this one unless you're fluent in Japanese. If this one does make it to our side of the world in English, by all means grab it up and quick!

G 10 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 — **93**



Super Magnetic NiuNiu
Dreamcast Import
Genki
Platformer
Reviewed page 76

Egad! We finally get something approaching a traditional platformer on DC and this is what we get?! Genki did us right on *VF3tb*, *Xtreme Racer* and *Virtua Striker*... guess they were due for a visit from the old Genki (*Kileak* anyone?). Frustrating control (too slow by far, and what's with that run?); passable graphics (this is DC isn't it?); and monotonously frustrating level design. Sure, the positive/negative gameplay is a cool idea but it hardly comes off... at all.

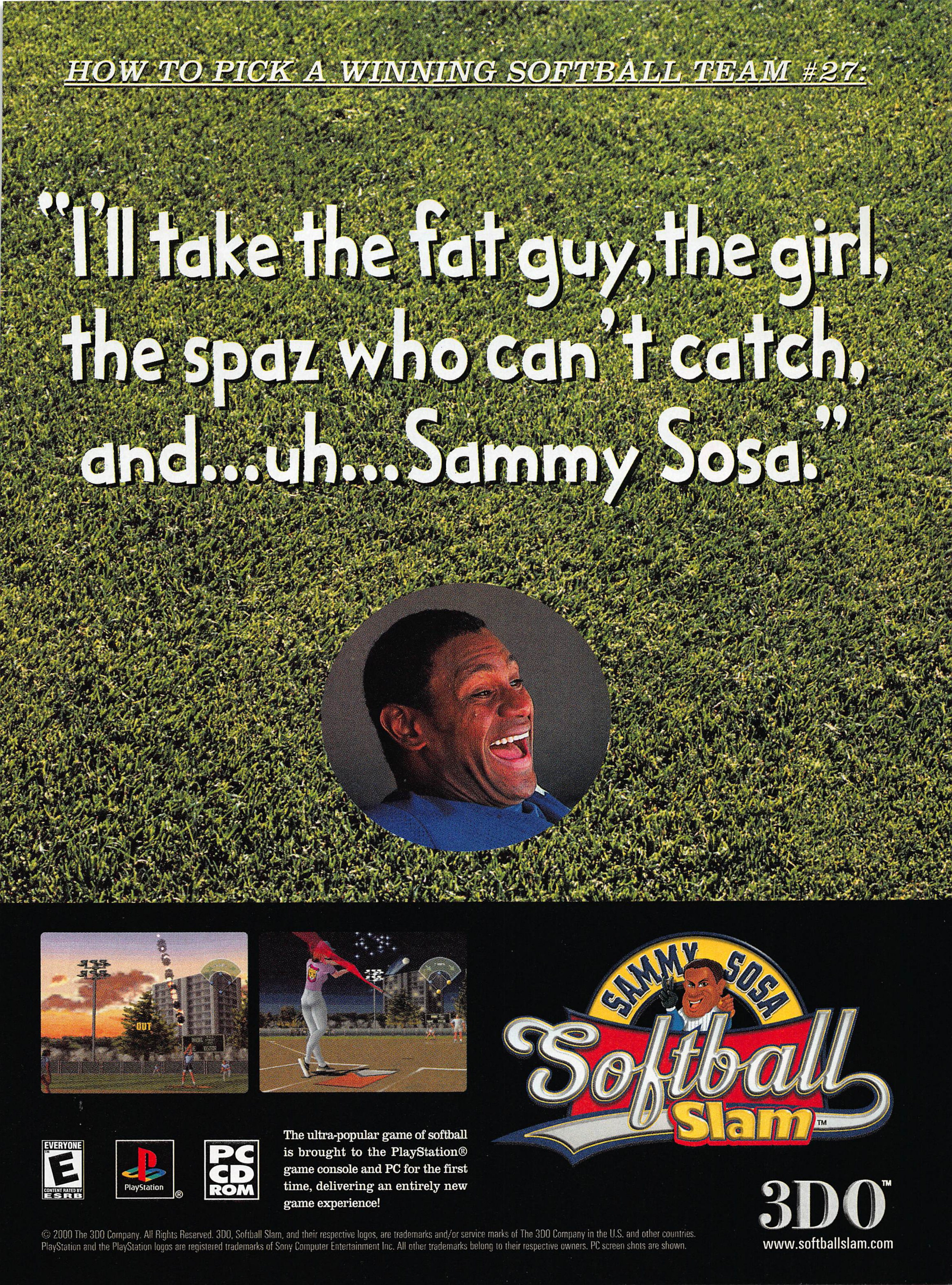
G 6 C 6 P 5 M 5 O 8 — **65**

I like this game. It may have borrowed a lot from *Crash* and other platformers, but *Niu Niu* has its own unique charm. The control is the only real problem—when you run, it's difficult to steer, and the button layout isn't very intuitive. After many unfortunate deaths, you'll get used to it, but alternate control schemes would've alleviated much of the early frustration. This is no *Sonic* or *Crash*, but there's enough substance to warrant a *NiuNiu 2*.

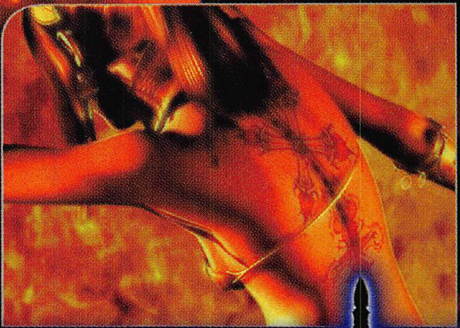
G 8 C 5 P 8 M 7 O 4 — **83**

I can appreciate Genki trying something fairly original, especially after their DC porting extravaganza but this is lame...no way around it! And what's up with this character design? Is NiuNiu related to the teletubbie family? Look, like every other hardcore gamer I'd like to see some platformers surface on the DC—but not this kind. Why Crave decided to bring this one stateside instead of Voct is beyond me. I'll hold out for SA2.

G 8 C 5 P 4 M 4 O 6 — **45**


HOW TO PICK A WINNING SOFTBALL TEAM #27:
"I'll take the fat guy, the girl, the spaz who can't catch, and...uh...Sammy Sosa."
OUT
SAMMY SOSA Softball Slam™
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PlayStation®
PC CD ROM
The ultra-popular game of softball is brought to the PlayStation® game console and PC for the first time, delivering an entirely new game experience!
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ベイグラントストーリー

VAGRANT STORY



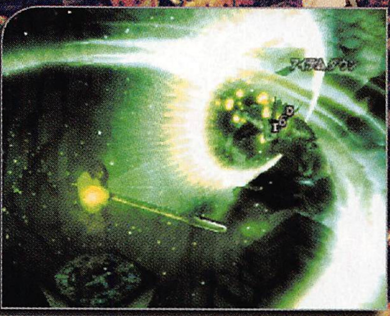


ECM and Square: Best of Friends

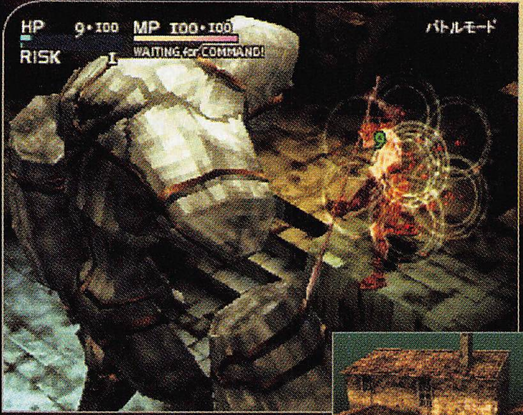
OK Square, you don't like me and I don't like you. Ever since that little accident a few years back you've been (nearly) nothing but bad news and disappointment time and time again—*Tactics* was amazing but everyone's entitled to one good game. Sure, Eggo thinks you're the cat's pajamas and all that hooey but this is the same guy that listens to Poison everyday and thinks that "End of Days" is cinema du art—not exactly one that's gifted with what even a generous person would term 'taste.' So now we're once again staring each other down, and it doesn't look pretty, so let's just get this over with and we can both move on with our lives... what's that? This game was produced by the *Final Fantasy Tactics* team? Um, well maybe I was a bit hasty in my initial appraisal, perhaps I'll have just a quick look around. Mind you, this doesn't mean that we're going to get along it's just that... hey, what' this... nice graphics, impressive music... no, no you're not getting away that eas—whoa, now that was pretty cool, how do I do that again? Press circle, then triangle. What? No, it's not *that* neat—hey what the hell was that... that's bloody friggin' cool... you say the *Tactics* team handled this...? What? No, I'm not enjoying myself... smile?! What smile? Are you drunk?! Come here before I—hey, what was that... Jesus, now that **is** amazing... maybe this is kinda OK... but don't think you're off the hook yet... I've got my eye on you...

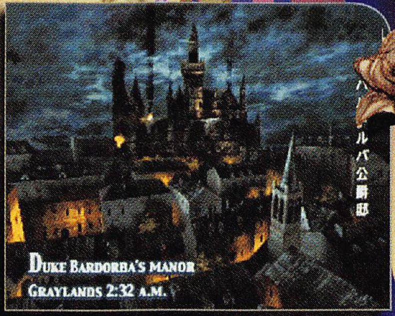


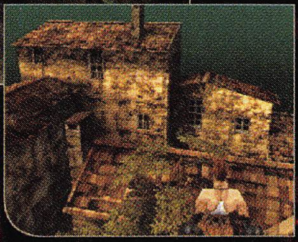




F FEATURE			
	EGGO: WHY CAN'T THEY ALL BE LIKE THIS, SQUARE?	DEVELOPER - SQUARE	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - SQUARE	AVAILABLE MAY











And Now, Some History...
What kills me about the post-16-bit Square: The only games by them that I even remotely enjoy are the three that I'm never likely to ever see sequels to: *Einhander*, *Tobal 2* and the earth-shattering *Final Fantasy Tactics* (the **best** PlayStation game ever). So needless to say, whenever I hear that any of the teams responsible for those games churns out another title, I'm the first to take note... and break into a frenzied dance of joy. Well, I haven't exactly been lucky as of late...

First, Dream Factory goes off and creates *Ehrgeiz* as the successor to *Tobal* (I don't think Kodomo will **ever** get over that), then the team behind *Einhander* simply disappears (not surprising considering the fragile state of the shooter scene), and to top it all off, I catch wind that the *Tactics* team is **not** working on a sequel to their opus but a whole new game that melds the best aspects of *Metal Gear Solid* with *Parasite Eve*—two of my favorite games from the last 2 years, <super shudder>. To say I wasn't expecting much of *Vagrant Story* would be saying too much.

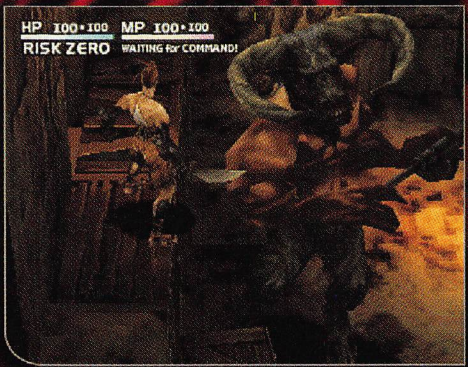
And now, here I am, two and a half years since I first laid hands on a very early, very busted (translation-wise) copy of *FF Tactics* only to have the latest from the same team arrive on my desk with little more than a few muttered phrases from Eggo about it getting "all 10's in Famitsu" (the closest thing to a gaming bible the Japanese possess). Oh, and the painful knowledge that it was probably going to be some Frankenstein's monster hybrid of *Parasite Eve* and *MGS*—of course I meant that in the nicest possible way... right.



By now, of course, you'd think I'd have learned my lesson: After all, I thought *Soul Calibur* and *RE: Code Veronica* were going to be lackluster games and we know how those both turned out. But hey, I'm a slow learner... plus, of course, it was a Square game (you all know how I feel about those) **and** it was on PlayStation, a machine I grow wearier of by the nanosecond. All in all, it was adding up to the second coming of *Final Fantasy VIII*, and I had all the tools sharpened in anticipation of a flaying the gaming world hadn't seen in quite some time. Of course I was wrong... again... <sigh>.



Story Time
You take the role of Ashley Riot, Risk Breaker, a top-notch agent of the Valendia Knights of the Peace (VKP). You're on the tail of Sydney Losstarot, resident bad guy and possessor of one wicked manicure.



While hot on the trail of Sydney you move deeper into the legendary city of Lea Monde. And while it becomes clear that Mr. Nails isn't a particularly friendly guy, as you move deeper into the city you become more intertwined in a developing power struggle between Sydney and some of his 'allies,' the Council (you figure it out) and even Ashley's own VKP. Each has their eyes set on claiming Lea Monde for their own enigmatic designs (and I'd gather **none** of them are out to host a charity ball).

All of this is played out in series of blazing, real-time cinemas sprinkled throughout the game. And that's part of what makes this title so compelling, so hardcore. Seeing as how this is the *Tactics* team, it's clear that these guys aren't keen on creating a silly, PG-13 rated *FF* game that more resembles "Beverly Hills 90210." No sir, they've crafted an intricate story replete with deception, murder, intrigue and all the fun little diversions that any good drama is comprised of—and drama this game has in spades.

Tactics: All Grown Up

Graphically, *Vagrant Story* mostly delivers. The character designs are blazing and are highly reminiscent of *Tactics*, just grown up. Yep, no super-deformed antics here. Full-sized, leather-clad, evil-looking mooks make up the bulk of this game. Just take a look at some of the character art scattered around this page—this isn't your little brother's Square game (thank God I don't see any cowboys this time around).







The engine is clean and clearly based on a modified *Tactics* core. What this means for you is that the environs are a little on the small side, but the character engine more than makes up for it. After you get a look at some of the bosses and a few of the characters interacting you'll forget about the relatively small size of the arenas.

The engine is also fast and lacks anything remotely akin to seams—I'd go so far as to say it's the best 3D engine Square has ever coded.

The only negative at this point, is that the game is running on PlayStation. See, while everything looks good and nice from afar, get up close and it's pixel-laden death. Here's to hoping that new texture-interpolation feature on PS2 remedies some of this, because this game's a beaut outside of that fact.

Risking It

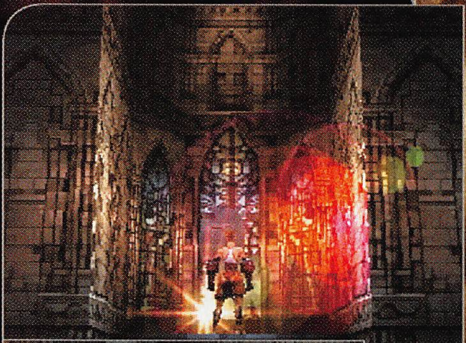
Say what you will about fruity Japanese arcade RPG 'systems,' but some of them are more than just cool-sounding, innovation-lacking buzz phrases. In the case of *Vagrant Story* it couldn't be any closer to the truth. Each and every system in *Vagrant Story* is a joy to behold, especially the Risk Breaker system, which ties into nearly every aspect of the game.

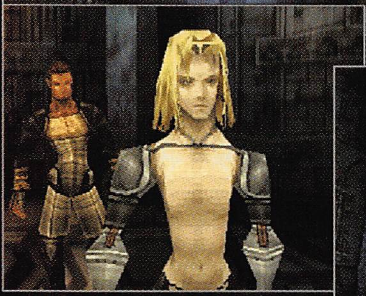
The Risk Breaker system works like this: As you engage in combat with any of the game's motley crew of monsters, mutants and miscreants you can combo hits together. With careful timing you can theoretically do infinite hit combos, though obviously most enemies will wither sometime a hair under eternity. As you repeatedly strike enemies and build successful combo strings, your riskbreaker ranking will improve, anywhere from 0 to 100. The higher your risk, the more damage each subsequent blow will inflict on your hapless (or not-















so-hapless when facing the screen-choking bosses) foe. Sounds pretty nifty, doesn't it? After all, you gaming ninjas out there probably figure that you've got this game licked—cause, hey, you've played enough fighting games to this point in your lives that you figure 'How hard could it be to wreck anything that you're likely to face (including those namby-pamby screen-filling bosses)?' Thing is, the higher your risk goes, the more damage their attacks do as well. So while you could be happily hacking away at an enemy (starting with no risk) and successfully chaining together enough blows to obtain a 100 (and doing massive damage in the process), one missed strike (signaling an abrupt end to a combo) and you're cannon fodder—even the weakest enemies will deal some bone-shattering blows if your risk is exceedingly high (the bosses will flat-out annihilate you if you get nailed with one of their more powerful strikes).

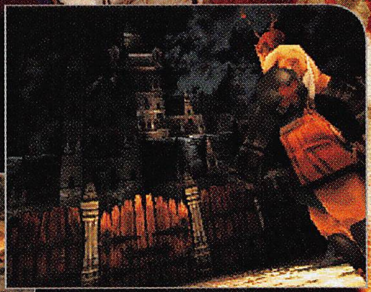
Of course there are other ways to build your risk: countering attacks for example, but the equation remains the same—higher risk breaker ranking equals higher risk—capiche?

In fact, everything in the game links to your relative risk at any given time. Healing spells, potions, magic, etc. will **all** be more potent with higher risk. Just remember, there's nothing worse than tooling on some massive boss, strutting around like you're cock of the roost, and then getting whacked by a slime—I don't think I'll **ever** hear the end of that.

Tools of the Trade

As if the Risk Breaker system wasn't amazing enough in its own right, how 'bout the massive selection of weapons and magic at your disposal? Oh yes, enough heavy metal to make even the biggest D&D geek's dream come true. Battleaxes, broadswords, foils, pikes, halberds, crossbows, canes (yes, canes), and even bastard swords (to name a few)—enough pointy-edged implements of death and destruction to make even Conan blush. Best of all, you can become more proficient with every weapon you add to your arsenal.

By 'practicing' (well, lopping off limbs constitutes practice, right?) each weapon will become more powerful against whatever type of critter you're fighting, whether it be a human in armor or the largest dragon in the game. Even the lowly cane can become more deadly than the sharpest sword with enough bloodletting. Hell, if there was a pen in this game you could probably build it up to a level that crushes the largest bastard sword.







Making Peace

If Square would churn out more games like this, I'd be their biggest fan. This game may prove to be Square's biggest hit yet (with adequate marketing, of course) and could go a long way in showing that there is life beyond *Final Fantasy*—no really, there is. Now I anxiously await a final rev so that I might finish taking Ashley through his quest for vengeance (oh, did I forget to mention that... oops). **ECM**

"The Critics have Spoken on the Action / Adventure Game of the Year!"





"A technical achievement...Soul Reaver delivers an epic piece of vampiric literature...93%"
– IGN.com

"Soul Reaver is a deep game possessed with a myriad of impressive little touches...9/10"
– VideoGames.com

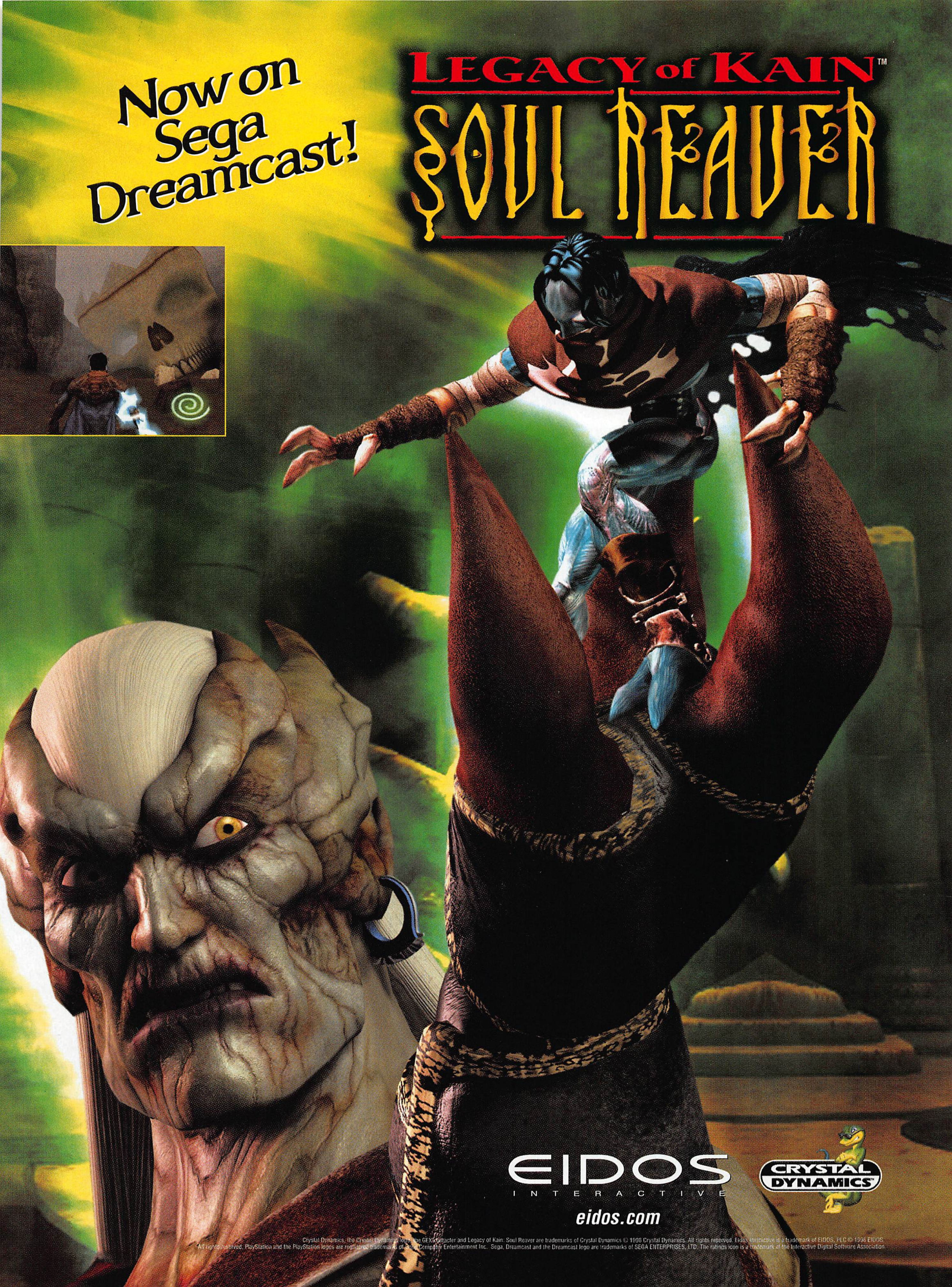
"3D exploration and adventure at its finest...Game of the Month."
– Expert Gamer Magazine

"Soul Reaver's environment's are jaw dropping."
– Gaming-Age.com

"98%"
– PS Extreme Magazine

- As Raziel, stalk Nosgoth feeding on the souls of your enemies
- Engage your creator, Kain, in an epic struggle for dominance
- Dark gothic story
- No load times

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From February 18th-20th, Sony held the PlayStation Festival 2000 in Japan to showcase the plethora of PS2 games (twenty-seven, actually... is that enough to warrant 'plethora' status?) that'll be available in the month of March, and I was lucky enough to attend. Finally, the media and the public got the chance to sit down and play many of these highly anticipated PS2 titles for lengthy periods of time. Numerous companies and attendants were also on hand to answer questions, pass out fliers and assist any non-ninja gamers.

A Japanese press conference was also held on Friday to announce future titles such as Capcom's big-budget action/adventure game *Onimusha*, *Maximo* (think *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* in 3D by Capcom), *Extermination*, a *Biohazard*-like action/adventure title from SCEI (that's *Resident Evil* for the import disinclined), SCEI's RPG *Dark Cloud*, Tecmo's *Dead or Alive 2* (which already graces the DC), and *Armored Core 2* (whose mech models have surprising detail and poly counts).

I confess that I wasn't very interested in the budding console going into the Festival, but after seeing the mass of niche titles available so early in the system's career, and after I got to play some of the headliners, I came away with a much greater appreciation for it. Let me tell you what I saw...

プレイステーション2 フェスティバル

PlayStation 2 Festival

Exhibited Games



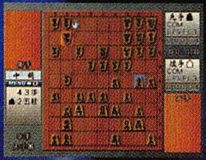




A-Train 6: This graphical juggernaut boasts visuals that would make the PlayStation proud... the original PlayStation, that is. Lay your own railroad tracks piece by piece around the town.

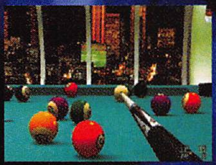


Kakinoki Shougi IV: Shougi is a Japanese board game similar to chess. What we've got here is a high-res board game.





Doukyu Billiards Master 2: 128-bit power—for a pool game! What I don't understand is why there are *two* pool games so close to the system's launch.



American Arcade: Classic pinball machines come home. Pinball's always fun, though you're probably not used to seeing one this close to launch... Still, it gives the Astroll Co. the excuse to dress its female assistants as Playboy bunnies—because you know Playboy bunnies and pinball go hand in hand.





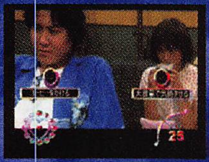
Street Fighter EX3: This game looks great, which should be obvious from the screen shots. It plays like *EX*, with a new tag option, à la every other fighting game on the market. Once you beat an enemy, you have the option of taking them as your partner in the next fight. As many as four players can play, though it's uncertain how this will work, and there was a character edit mode in the menus that was unavailable in the version I played. The game's loading times were horrible—let's pray that it's because the game hasn't been optimized yet. If not, you'll have time to pick up another hobby between battles...





0 Story: This dating sim/love story game has the highest quality FMV I've ever seen. When I glanced at the kiosk for the first time, I thought I was looking at a DVD movie on display, until I noticed the marquee. Move your magic wand around the screen and... uh, touch girls where you please... Umm... Well, you get the idea. Get them to fall in love with you.





Snowboard Supercross: EA's snowboarding title will be the only American-developed game available near launch. When the game's released in the U.S., the name will be changed to *Snowboard Super X*, and there's a whole list of added features that developers hope to implement in the time before releases. In its current state, *SS* looks O.K. The large characters are comprised of 2500 polys (though the final rev is supposed to have 5000), and they look good. Unfortunately, the game's frame-rate is so sporadic it hurts. Hopefully, it'll be brought up to the targeted constant 60fps by its release.





Eternal Ring: The second I saw the swinging sword, this first-person shooter reminded me of *Maken X*. The environment textures look great, the frame-rate's rock-solid and the boss presentation is cinematic. Unfortunately, the speed of the game's currently WAY too slow; it feels like you're moving underwater in that 'car crash imminent' slow motion.





Evergrace: This former PS title's been upgraded to PS2 status. It's a *Zelda*-like free-roaming 3D adventure, running at 60fps (which seems to be the standard of the 128-bit era) with nice animation, though it suffered from some slow-down and shimmering textures when moving around.



Stepping Selection: Jaleco's take on *Dance Dance Revolution*. If you're a blue-haired freak like Cerberus, yes, the game comes with the footpad controller accessory so you can look like a fool in the comfort of your own home. Hop on the right spots in time to the beat.



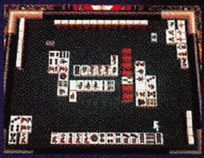
Kessen: Definitely one of the most impressive titles at launch. Think *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* with amazing cut-scenes—five to ten second real-time battle sequences like "Braveheart," illustrating the total carnage that ensues as legions of men run into walls of spears, cavalry, archers, etc. There are **a lot** of guys in these scenes, and they're all real-time character models. The one drawback is that the cut-scenes are letterboxed vertically—probably to maintain the sweet frame rate. For useless trivia, this is the only launch game that will be available on DVD format; the rest are all CDs.

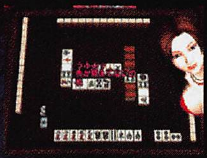






Mahjong Taikai III Millennium League: This mahjong game looks a bit better than the rest. Characters pop in from the side of the screen from time to time to make comments.





Jikkyou World Soccer 2000: The best looking console soccer game yet. It features an impressive frame-rate and animation for a soccer title, considering all the characters that run around at the same time. When a goal is scored, the camera zooms in on the scorer and displays the finest details of the engine, much like *NFL2K*.





Powerful Baseball 7: A very cute super-deformed baseball game that doesn't exactly flex the PS2's poly-pushing muscle... In fact, the characters could use a little anti-aliasing, believe it or not. Still, it looks like a fun arcade game that should play well...



Drum Mania: Complete with a drum kit peripheral—*Beatmania* meets drums. Drive your neighbors insane!



Let's Play Mahjong 2: Yet another mahjong game at the Festival. You've seen mahjong? You've seen *Let's Play Mahjong 2.*







Ridge Racer V: If I had to pick a game of the show from those available at launch, this is the one. I can't stress enough how impressive it is to see *Ridge Racer* run at 60fps at all times—no slow-down, and a brand-new, shiny engine for this game. I prefer the way *Ridge Racer* plays, so this is my racing pick for PS2.





Tekken Tag Tournament: I kind of wonder why this game was pushed back from a launch title to late March. What I played at the show would sell boatloads if Namco released it as it is, but it looks like the company isn't happy with it. That only bodes well for the millions of *Tekken* fans out there, though. Outstanding graphics and a solid frame-rate make this a showpiece title for sure. If you're searching for flaws, there was shimmering on some of the polygon edges, especially on characters with a lot of polys, like Lei. Loading time's almost non-existent.

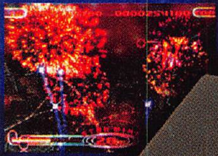




Fantavision: A very colorful, pretty fireworks game where you jump from target to target to prime the next explosion. When you can't find the next target, your chain combo ends. I saw some 100-explosion combos—flashy and very original.







I.Q. Remix +: The sequel to the obscure puzzle game *Intelligent Qube*. I didn't spend much time in front of this one, but the graphics look like they could've been done on the PlayStation... not that that should matter for people who play puzzle games.





Gran Turismo 2000: The best looking racing game ever. Not only that, it's *Gran Turismo*, a license that's as good as platinum... *GT* fans will be pleased, and I'm sure Reubus absolutely can't wait to get his hands on it. He's been leading the *GT2000* faction against a couple of editors touting *Sega GT*. I've got nothing bad to say about it except that it won't be available at launch.



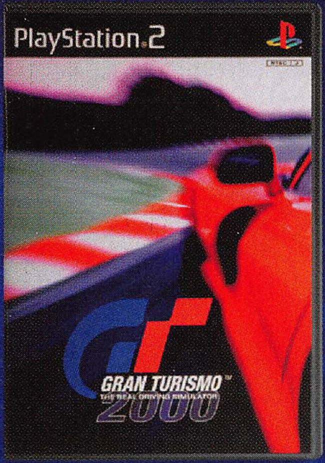




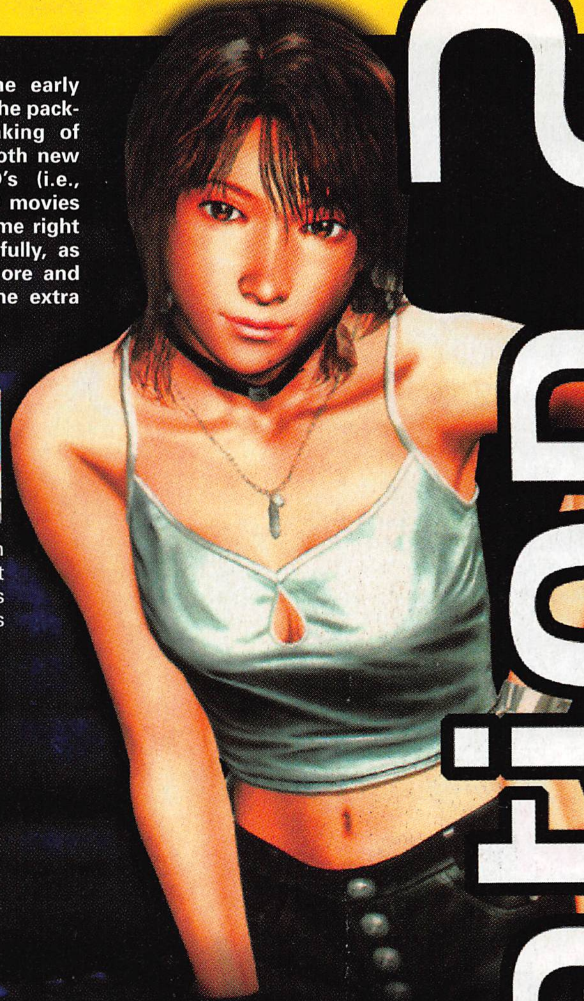


プレイステーション2 フェスティバル

PlayStation 2 Festival



Check out the cool box style for the early PlayStation 2 games. It looks a lot like the packaging for current DVD movies. Speaking of which, while the PlayStation 2 plays both new (PlayStation 2 games) and old CD's (i.e., PlayStation 1 games), it also plays DVD movies and games. *Kessen* is the only PS2 game right now to utilize the DVD format. Hopefully, as developers get used to the console, more and more games will take advantage of the extra space available in DVD's.







Be On Edge (name subject to change): A combination music/puzzle game with *Parappa*-like cutout graphics. Drop notes onto an empty music sheet so your notes don't go over the limit of eight beats per measure; this puzzle game requires a lot of concentration and quick reflexes. It also comes with a speaker/headphone-like peripheral that rests on your shoulders so you really feel the music up close and personal.





Driving Emotion Type-S: A decent-looking PS2 racer, but with *Ridge Racer V* and *Gran Turismo 2000* out there... Well, it's sort of like *Mortal Kombat Gold* at the U.S. Dreamcast launch, overshadowed by the competition of *Soul Calibur* and *Powerstone*. I also had problems adjusting to the control. I looked around, and "Wrong Way" flashed on every screen. People were getting turned around every which way.



Gekikukan Professional Baseball: Great-looking baseball game with large characters and stunning realism.



EX Billiards: A super-shiny, high-res pool game! Video billiards never looked this good... of course, we're talking about pool balls here.

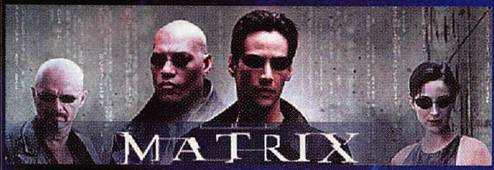


Golf Paradise: Woohoo! Unlike *Tee Off Golf* on the Dreamcast (which didn't really take advantage of the system's graphical capabilities, and looks more like an N64 game), *Golf Paradise* looks like a next-gen game. There's a standard-issue swing meter, driving range, game modes, etc.



Morita Shougi: *Shougi* game #2.

The Matrix: Time Warner Home Video was playing "The Matrix" on DVD on multiple screens. The stations allowed you to wade through the DVD's ocean of extra content while showing off the PS2's DVD playback ability.



Square Press Conference

Weeks before the PS2 Festival, Square announced that it would hold a press conference on the first day of the Festival at a separate location to announce a brand-new PS2 game. Naturally, with all that idle time before the festival, the American press ventured many guesses as to what the game would be. Sadly, none of our suggestions were anywhere close to the truth of the actual announcement.

The focus of the press conference was the announcement that Square and Disney Interactive had signed a deal to collaborate on a single PS2 game. The producer and character designer for the project will be Tetsuya Nomura (character designer for *Final Fantasy VII* & *VIII* and *Parasite Eve*), and the release date for the game's set for late 2001 in Japan and 2002 in the U.S. and Europe. Square's going all out on this one: The *Final Fantasy* team itself's working on it. The game's still very early in development as of yet, but it's supposed to be an action/RPG with at least one Disney character in it.

In case you're confused, don't worry—we were too. This game will feature Disney character(s) and a Disney world, but Nomura will be doing character design... so there'll be original characters as well. During the press conference, we were shown preliminary animated footage of Goofy walking and running which looked pretty nice. The game's still early, though; it doesn't even have a name yet. Hopefully, it won't be *Mickey's Mysterious Dungeon of Illusion*...

Throughout the Q & A period, journalists probed Square to determine exactly what Disney's role was in the project. Square seems to be handling the majority of game development and publication, while Disney's role in the partnership appears to be primarily of supervision and licensing—ensuring that the end product's worthy of the Disney name and characters. Perhaps (and this is **complete speculation** on our part) this alliance is just the groundwork for a future partnership in either movies or games... When asked about the nature of the relationship, Square and Disney hinted that there could be future game collaborations in the works between the two companies, but as of now, only one title's been announced. Oh, and in case you were wondering: Pixar Animation Studios has no involvement with this new game.

The conference opened with a history of Disney's animation, from its beginnings to its current state, and ended with a classically unsettling Disney song-and-dance routine complete with Mickey, Minnie, Donald, and Daisy, traipsing out of the wings and waving. Don't get me wrong—I like song and dance just as much as the next guy. But it was jarring. One minute, I'm in a serious Japanese press conference, the next I'm hearing the band strike up the tune as Mickey and Donald burst out of the curtains, all giddy and dancing. Very bizarre... We wish Square and Disney all the best—and someday, when Square rules the world, we hope it remembers the little people, without whom none of this would be possible.

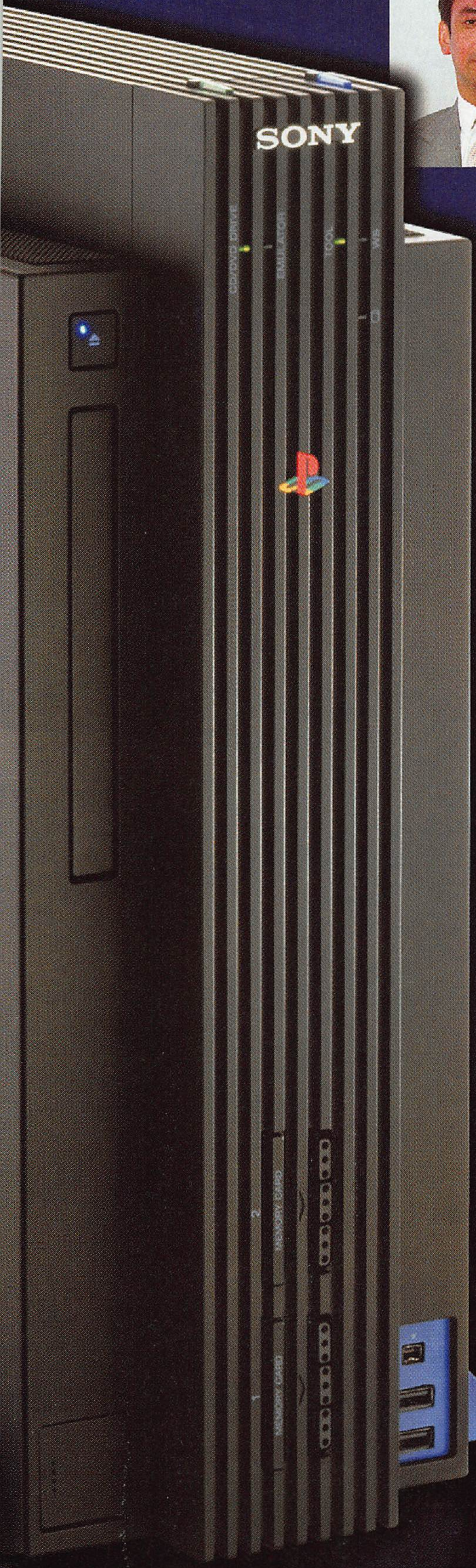












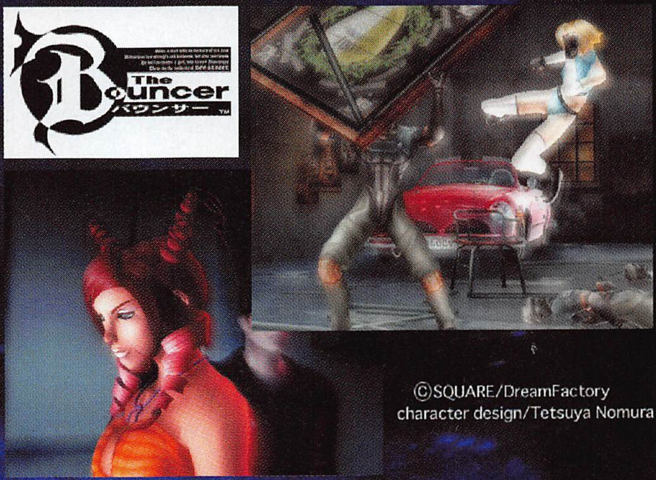


Interview with Shinji Hashimoto

Producer of The Bouncer & Final Fantasy IX

GameFan: Yoshitaka Amano (character designer for the early* Final Fantasy *and* Front Mission *games) has returned to create the characters of* FF IX*, but is he or Tetsuya Nomura (character designer for* FF VII *and* VIII*) handling the design of* Final Fantasy X *and* XI*?
Hashimoto: Tetsuya Nomura is doing the character design for *Final Fantasy X* and *XI*.

GF: Why was the decision made to return to Amano for* FF IX*?
SH: Well, it depended on the direction we wanted to go with the project. Traditionally, Amano's work has been more of fantasy, while Nomura's work has been more futuristic. This project [*FF IX*] started with Amano in mind so the game would be more like a fantasy game.



©SQUARE/DreamFactory
character design/Tetsuya Nomura

GF: Since Nomura is doing* FF X *and* XI*, should we expect those games to be futuristic?
SH: It's not been decided yet whether they will be futuristic or fantastic.

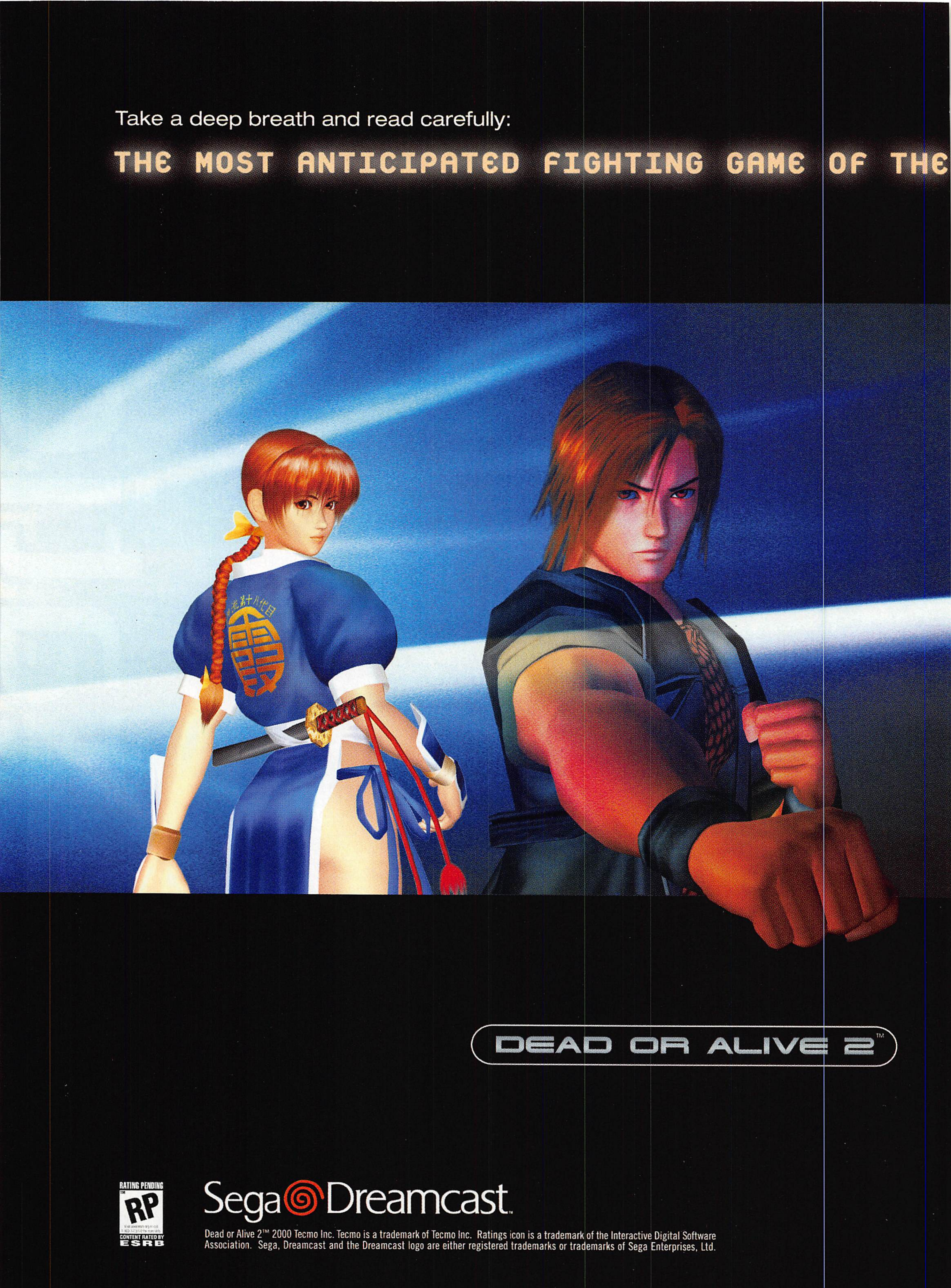
GF: What about the music? Is Nobuo Uematsu returning to compose the music for* Final Fantasy IX, X *and* XI*?
SH: While the decision hasn't been finalized yet, I don't think we will make any drastic changes, so expect Uematsu to do the music.

GF: How will the Internet come into play in* Final Fantasy X*?
SH: Using Play Online, players will be able to access an online guide for the game, giving hints in case they get stuck.

GF: Will the "Final Fantasy Movie" be released simultaneously in the U.S. and in Japan?
SH: Again, the decision hasn't been finalized yet, but it will probably be released in the U.S. first.

Gf: Is Hironobu Sakaguchi contributing anything to the upcoming FF games, or is he concentrating on the "Final Fantasy Movie?" What will his official title be?
SH: Mr. Sakaguchi will have a hand in these projects, but we haven't yet announced what his role will be. Expect a future announcement.

GF: Finally: Everywhere I turn in Japan right now, I see* Vagrant Story *posters and ads. Can we expect to see a sequel to this game?
SH: It's still too early yet to know how well *Vagrant Story* is doing, so... we shall see.


Take a deep breath and read carefully:
THE MOST ANTICIPATED FIGHTING GAME OF THE
DEAD OR ALIVE 2™
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Sega Dreamcast™
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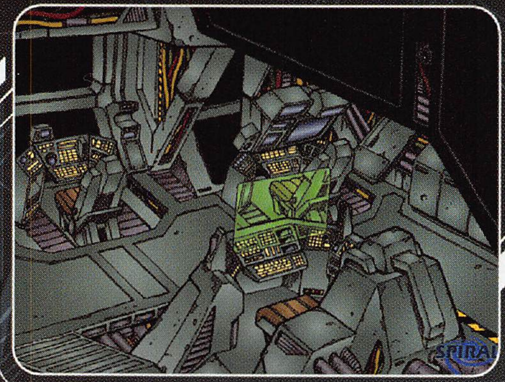
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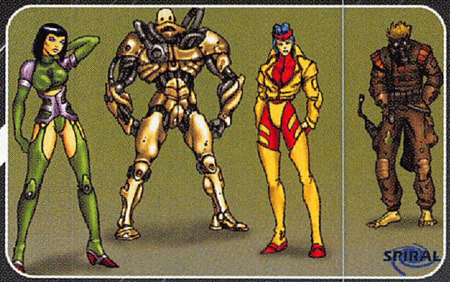
www.tecmoinc.com

developer spotlight

featuring ZONO's SPIRAL and METAL FATIGUE







A lot of the cool stuff seen in gamedom (or anywhere, for that matter) is a mish-mash of different ideas and concepts: Combine *Quake* with *Power Stone,* and you've got *Spawn.* Mix a little racing with Shigeru Miyamoto and surprise—you've got *Mario Kart.* Now, Zono's combined some *Gundam,* some *Warcraft* and a bit of its own magic brew to come up with *Metal Fatigue*: a game of epic battles with 50-foot, ironclad soldiers. Like its forerunners, *Metal Fatigue* thrusts international conflict into the world of real-time strategy. Add Zono's penchant for segmentation, and *Metal Fatigue* could easily stand among other strategy games with solid platinum alloy legs. *Metal Fatigue* might be Zono's latest release, but it's not the Irvine-based developer's most recent project...

Spiral, Zono's newest game concept (still just a concept—the game's nowhere near complete), will combine a number of space operas like "Star Wars," "Star Trek" and "Spaceballs" (well, maybe not the latter) with a tiny smidgen of *EverQuest* and Zono's love for anything segmented and/or modular. *Spiral* takes place in another universe—far, far away, no doubt—where space piracy's the only way. You'll be cast in the role of a space captain. There are so many ways to depict a captain, though. What kind is Zono aiming for? Well, the design team isn't shy in admitting that a lot of the inspiration comes from one of the best sci-fi cartoons ever, "Star Blazers." *Spiral* is intended to be an online multi-player experience, and will give players the interaction of *EverQuest* with *Trek*-like gameplay features—and if we're lucky, some Captain Harlock thrown in for good measure.

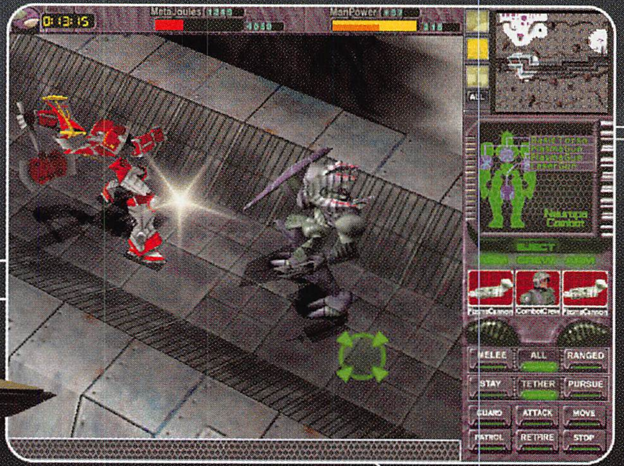
When it comes to online RPGs, it's all about individuality and level building. Zono wants to make sure players can give their in-game personae something to set them apart from every other Little Timmy out there. First off: Expect a massive stable of selectable character models—more than any of the other guys, Zono says. Second: These character models will have physical modifiers—tons of 'em. For example: Remember how faces in *EverQuest* could be interchanged before finalizing a character choice, adding personality to the otherwise stock characters? Well, *Spiral* goes a step further, and gives us the options of changing a character's height, weight, skin color, hair color, facial and other features I'm not allowed to mention just yet.

According to Novak (the 'No' in 'Zono'), a nearly open-ended character tool will give players the feeling that they're a single person in a race of beings. So even at the outset, Fury's pirate might look vastly different than Eggo's buccaneer. Their appearances may change as the game progresses, as well, be it from battle scars or purchasing (or finding) new rags. Who knows—if this whole game mechanic's as deep as Zono would like it to be, we might actually be able to spot our friends in a crowd. "Hey, look! There goes Cerberus and his blue hair!"

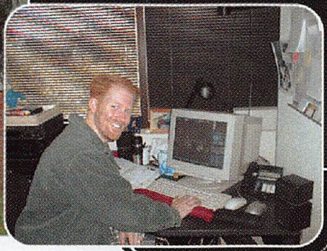
Speaking of the ship's crew, each vessel you captain will have enough room for a crew and its living quarters. Level building will come in the form of ship upgrades, not character attributes. Expect each ship to be as grandiose as something seen on "Star Trek" or "Robotech." These spacecraft will not only be highly detailed, but, as I mentioned before, they'll be modular, too. If there's some item that you really want in a ship, you can make it happen. Maybe there's a storage bay that would look great on the ship, or some rotary cannons for defense. Go find, buy and install them.

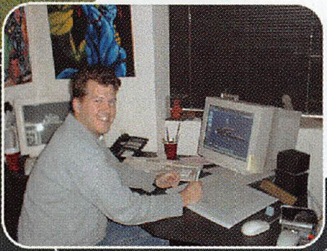
Maintenance will also come into play... perhaps the reactor core or plutonium turbines may need some working. Be

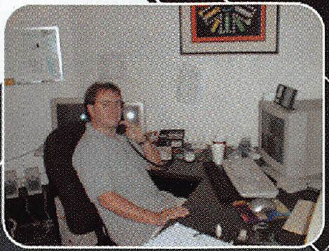












ZONO ZONO ZONO

Zono's creative team has changed since the days of Freakboy, but the Metal Fatigue team will remain intact. Here's the Spiral list, in alphabetical order:

Paul Byford
Game rendering engine, user interface and special effects programming

Richard Campomanes
User interface and object programming

Chris Cervantes
Zono tester

Brian Collins
Art Director, models, textures, layouts

Jeff Fort
Lead Programmer, Project Leader

Jason Hough
Lead Game Designer, missions, etc.

Mary Ann Kato
Office Manager

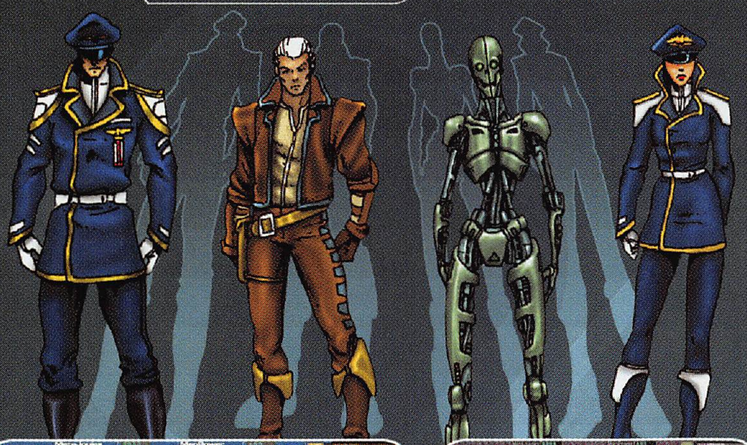
Scott McClellan
Artist, game design, missions

Novak
Game design, layouts, missions

Todd Pickens
Artist, models, textures, game design, missions

Ed Zobrist
Game concept/design, story

SPIRAL



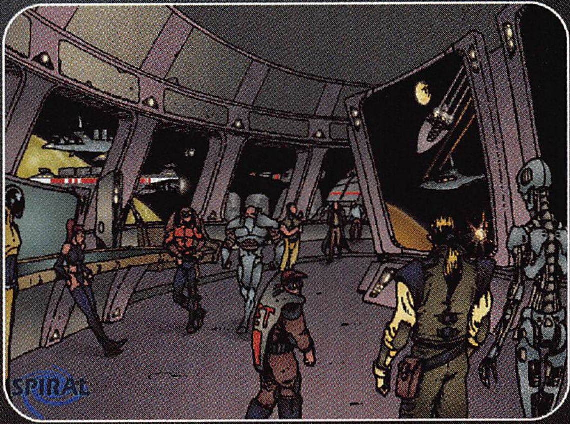






careful, though—if you procrastinate, the parts may go on the fritz and require even more money in repairs. If all goes well, the inevitable thousands of online ships won't look at all alike—at least not much, thanks to *Spiral*'s capitalist environment. Money truly will talk in *Spiral*... Nothing will advertise just how much money's in your coffers than when you dock a planet-sized vessel at your local spaceport. To make credits, players must complete various tasks, whether it's bartering, selling or simple run-'n-gun piracy.

If Zono succeeds at anything, it'll be at creating an all-immersive world that players can get into. As of press time, Zono has a game concept with no publisher—but E3's right around the corner, and a lot can happen when the game industry's hustlers and bustlers get together... We'll give you an update on this one as soon as Zono gets the game up and running. Until then—you'd better keep those DCs and PS2s warm. **Cerberus**



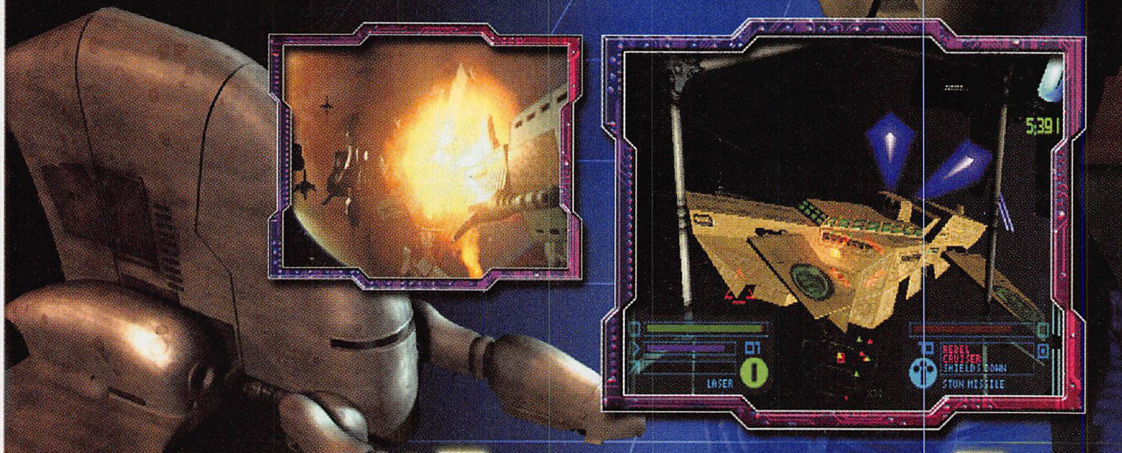




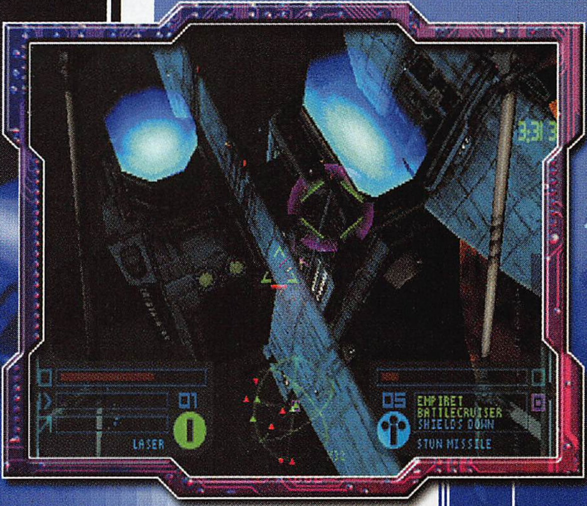
A long time ago, on a platform far, far away… I was a *Wing Commander* nut on the PC (back before the cinemas turned live-action). I used to cruise the galaxy every day with wingman in tow, acting out all the *Star Wars* fantasies I had as a kid. Now, Psygnosis gives a whole new generation of up-and-coming star pilots a chance to do the same—this time, on PlayStations. We're now facing the third installment of Psygnosis' fly-boy *Colony Wars* franchise, and much like *WipeOut*, these games have improved with every new chapter, like a well-oiled machine that keeps on truckin'.

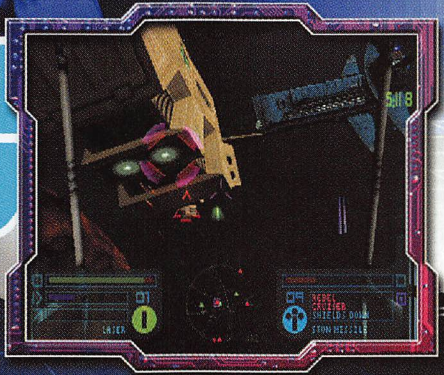
This time out, there are no sides to take up with, no Navy, no League. You're just Joe Schmoe (a.k.a. Valdemar), a poor unfortunate soul cursed with a horrible name and an even worse destiny—to save the galaxy as an unwilling intergalactic mercenary (hey, at least Valdemar's not scruffy-looking). During the course of this adventure, there'll be over fifty missions to scream through, each with multiple objectives (note: that's a lot of flying).

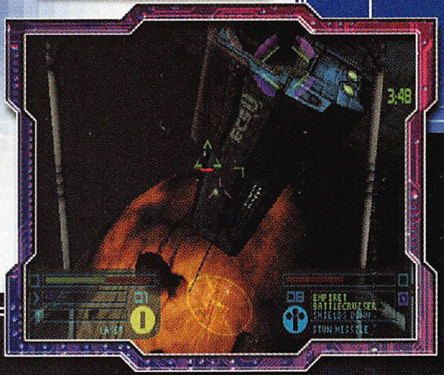
Yeah, you heard me, more missions. What else is there—more ships? How about eight different ones to control? You want more weapons as well? We've got forty-four nukes, knives and sharp sticks to blow your hard-earned cash on. After all, you're an intergalactic mercenary.



COLONY WARS RED SUN







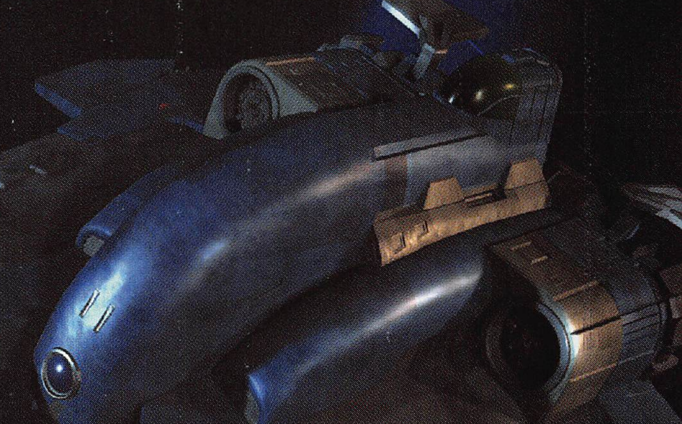
Expect to be paid Han-somely for each and every mission completed. Or, if you want to be like Fury, you can even spend some extra cash and upgrade your vehicle and weapons... But the biggest reward at the end of every mission has got to be the ability to save your game (whoa, did I just trigger flashbacks of the *Colony Wars* days, when you could only save at the end of an act?).

Visually, *Colony Wars* has always been one of the best-looking games, and *Red Sun* lives up to this top billing graphically. It's guaranteed to elicit a few gasps of astonishment at its vast expanses of space, shots of nebulae up close and personal, even its caravans of Cargo Stompers (which look remarkably like Imperial AT-STs from *Return of the Jedi*). Eye candy's always good (and the in-game graphics are accompanied by many CG sequences), but how does it play? Well, I have to say it plays pretty well. The mission structure's well laid out, presenting a number of choices that influence the course of the story long afterward.

I was immersed after playing but a few skirmishes, and I was anxious to see what lay ahead in upcoming missions... I've got no knocks against *Colony Wars: Red Sun*; Psygnosis has got a finely polished gem here. My only wish for the franchise is to make the leap to the PS2, that we can see what wonders await in the 128-bit galaxy.

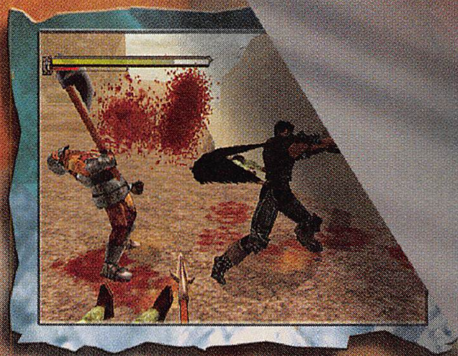
Eggo resisted the strong desire to use the pull quote: "Third time's the charm" for this review.





VIEWPOINT SCORE • 88	DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS LEEDS	1 PLAYER	EGGO: VALDEMAR...
	PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS	AVAILABLE NOW	I AM YOUR FATHER...

REVIEW

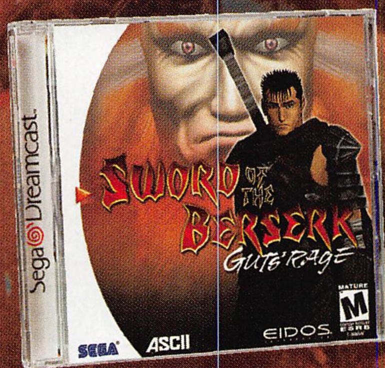




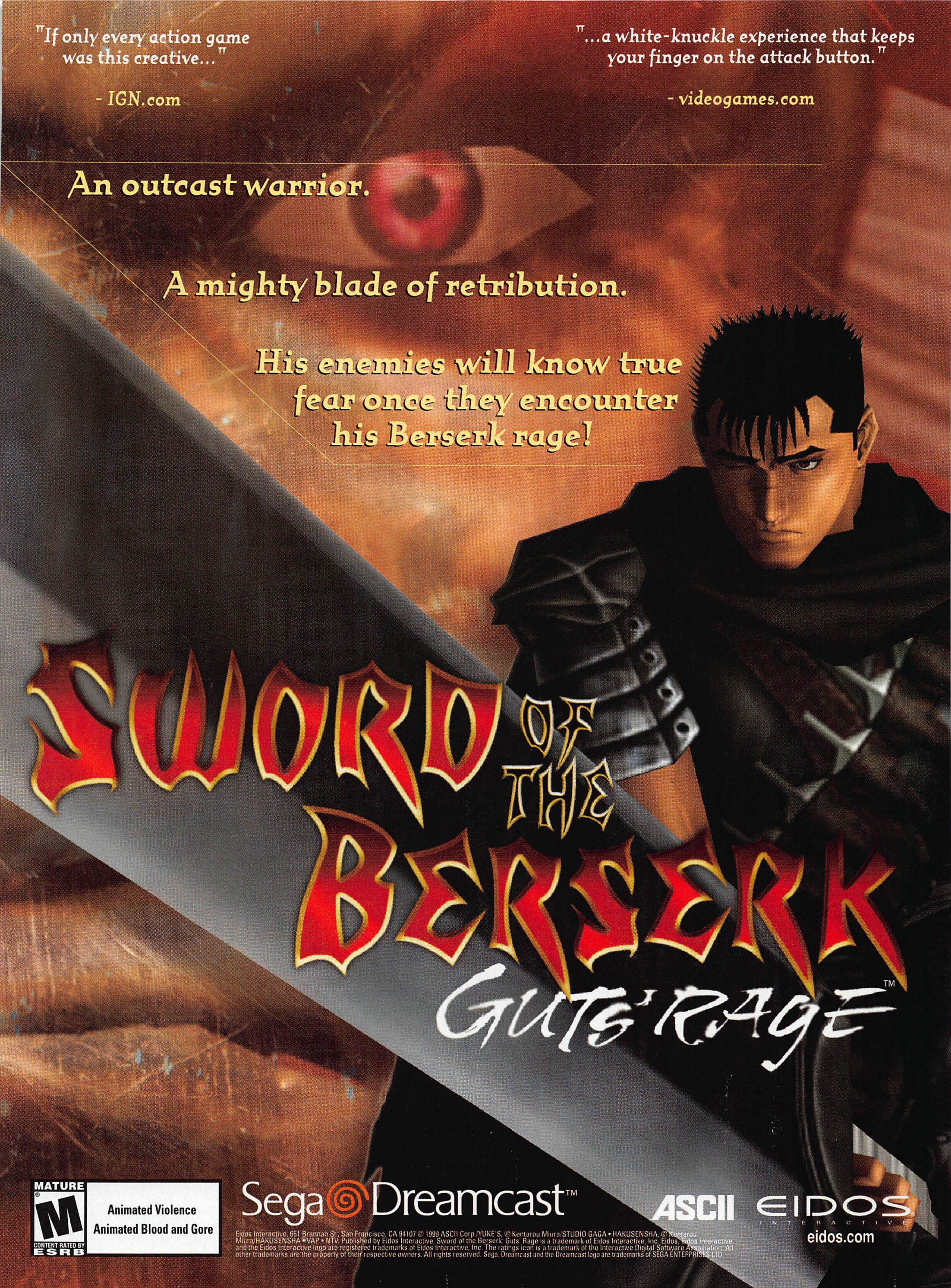








Sega Dreamcast
Sword of the Berserk
Guts' Rage
SEGA
ASCII
EIDOS



"If only every action game was this creative..."
- IGN.com
"...a white-knuckle experience that keeps your finger on the attack button."
- videogames.com
An outcast warrior.
A mighty blade of retribution.
His enemies will know true fear once they encounter his Berserk rage!
SWORD OF THE BERSERK
GUTS' RAGE™
MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Animated Blood and Gore
Sega Dreamcast™
ASCII
EIDOS INTERACTIVE
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I mentioned it in the preview, but it's a point worth raising again—this game's ugly. The original *Alundra* was a beautiful mix of hand-drawn sprites and 2D artistry, but *Alundra 2* features some of the most basic 3D character designs and environments in a game this side of *Guardian's Crusade* (unfortunately, *GC* had a better engine than *A2*, too). Just looking at the screen shots and the unfamiliar characters (the main character's now named Flint), fans of *Alundra* will be hard-pressed to recognize this as a sequel.

Working Designs translated the original *Alundra*, and while it may not have been as wacky as an *Albert Odyssey*, it still had a distinctly light-hearted WD flair. This time out, however, Activision's handling the localization duties, and the end result's a much more straightforward, serious translation. Don't expect to be rolling in the aisles because of the textual translation. The mood of some of the game's events is light-hearted and festive (like a Saturday morning cartoon), but the actual text is far from funny.

You can spot the unfortunate ones who played the original *Alundra* by the scars and bruises on their faces they got by repeatedly banging their heads against the wall (anyone else remember the torch-lighting puzzle?). Well, with the inevitable leap to 3D, *Alundra's* puzzles have taken a bit of a hit in the difficulty department. Most 3D adventure games have dumbed-down puzzles because programmers are still trying to figure out how to work around the 3D gameplay mechanic; *Alundra 2*'s no exception. Instead of the heinous puzzles from the first game, you now deal with box-pulling, switch-finding and generous 3D platforming. It's a far cry from the hair-rending days of old, is it not? For some, this easier *Alundra* is an improvement; there was no question that *Alundra* was a little **too** hard. However, I'm beginning to tire of the stagnant state of 3D puzzles; don't you get this disheartening feeling of déjà vu when solving the same puzzles over and over again in different games?





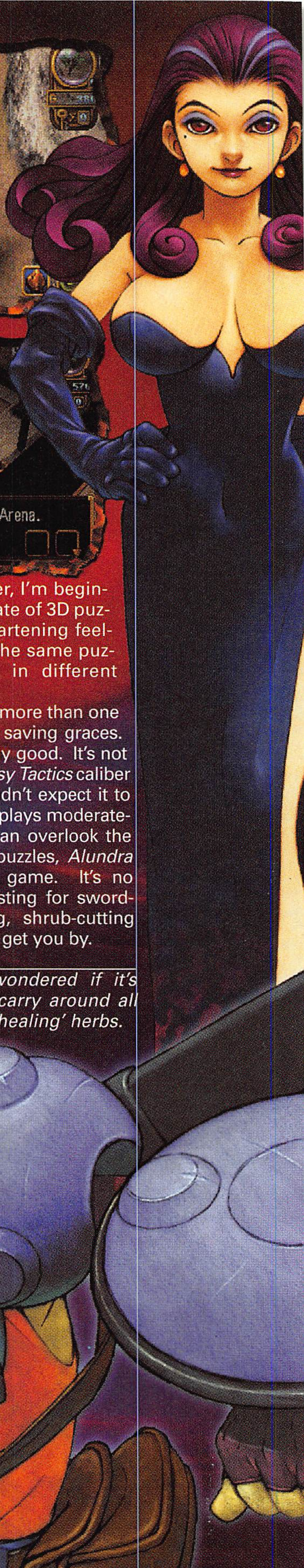




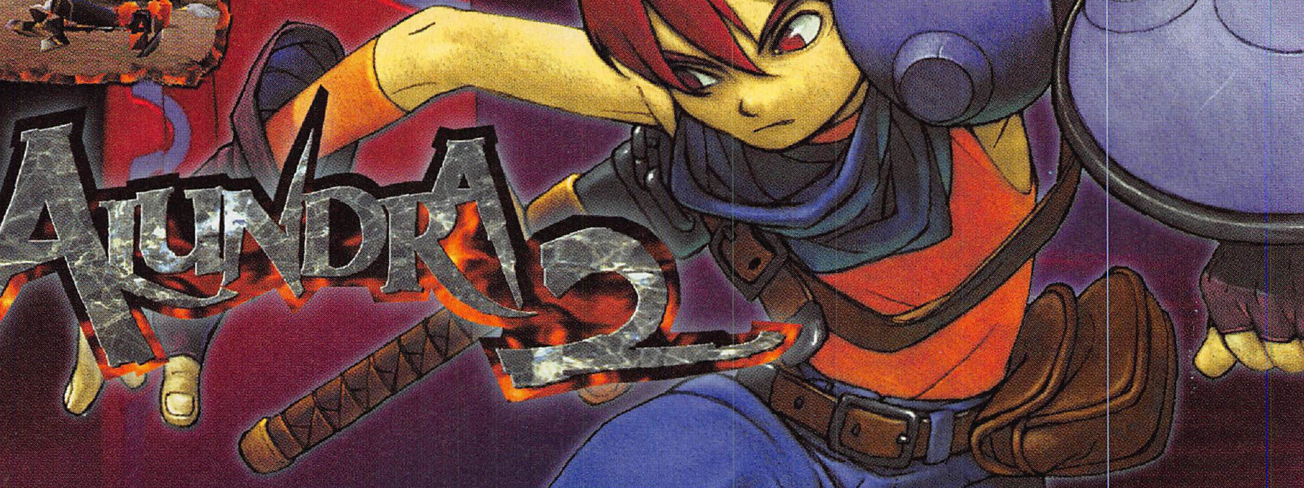
While *Alundra 2* stumbles in more than one area, it does have a couple of saving graces. The musical score's surprisingly good. It's not of *Chrono Cross* or *Final Fantasy Tactics* caliber (then again, what is?), but I didn't expect it to be as good as it is. The game plays moderately well, too... Provided you can overlook the bad graphics and simple puzzles, *Alundra 2*'s a decent adventure game. It's no *Zelda*, but if you're thirsting for sword-swinging, chest-opening, shrub-cutting adventure, this could just get you by.

Eggo always wondered if it's illegal to carry around all these 'healing' herbs.







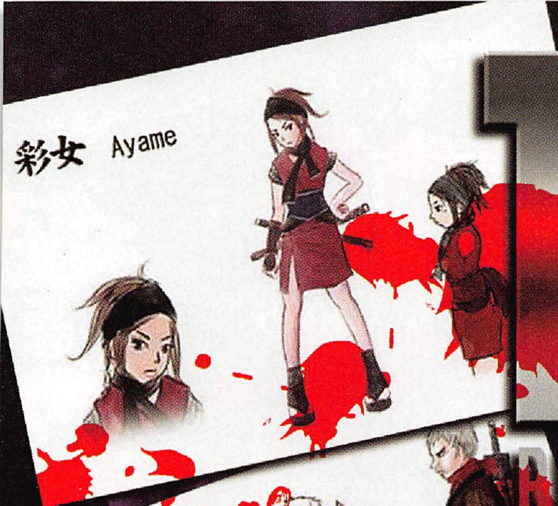


PlayStation

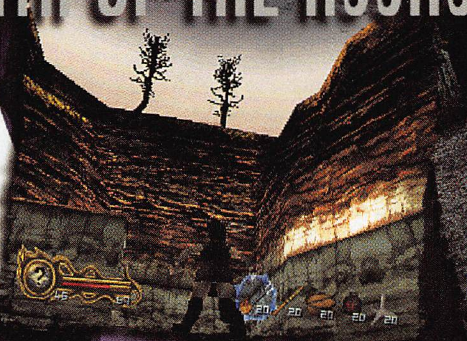
REVIEW	EGGO: IN LIKE FLINT...	DEVELOPER - MATRIX PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE SPRING	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 73

TENCHU 2

BIRTH OF THE ASSASSINS



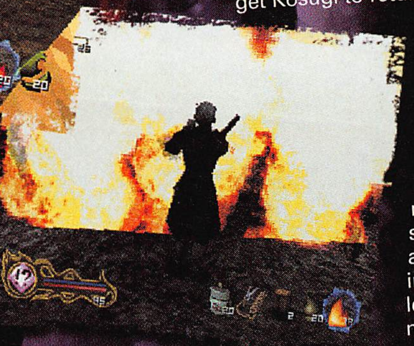














Back when I was counting the days till *Metal Gear Solid* (hey, two years of buildup followed by a release date—you'd be counting the days, too), *Tenchu* snuck onto the scene with very little fanfare. It stormed in and out of video game retailers almost overnight, and sold big-time as the first 3D stealth adventure. It's been one of my favorite PlayStation games since Day One. Dangohead and I continually proved our ninja gamer status, practicing useless tricks: knocking arrows out of the air with a sword, finishing entire levels without being seen (in the Japanese version), weaving between back alleys, hiding in the shadows, slitting throats... No, I'm not talking about Friday night in Los Angeles. *Tenchu's* back, and with no *Metal Gear* to compete, it's sure to leave a trail of slashed sales records in its wake.

So what would you expect from a *Tenchu* sequel—more missions, weapons, moves, enemies, music and playable characters? Well, you'll get all that and more from *Tenchu 2*... or so Activision says, though the preview copy we have is still very early, and needs a lot of work. The animation's incomplete, the collision detection is suspect, the AI has X-ray vision, and the lazy camera angles are a hazard to controllers everywhere. Of course, this is still an early version, and Activision has plenty of time to stitch this baby together with mashed dangos and ninja tape before the summer release date rolls around...

In case you were wondering, Activision is developing the game, while the original designer, Acquire, keeps an eye on the project, making sure it lives up to the *Tenchu* legacy. Also, if you liked the atmospheric music of the first, you'll be bouncing off the rooftops upon hearing that the same composer's coming back to create even more yodeling, ninja music madness.

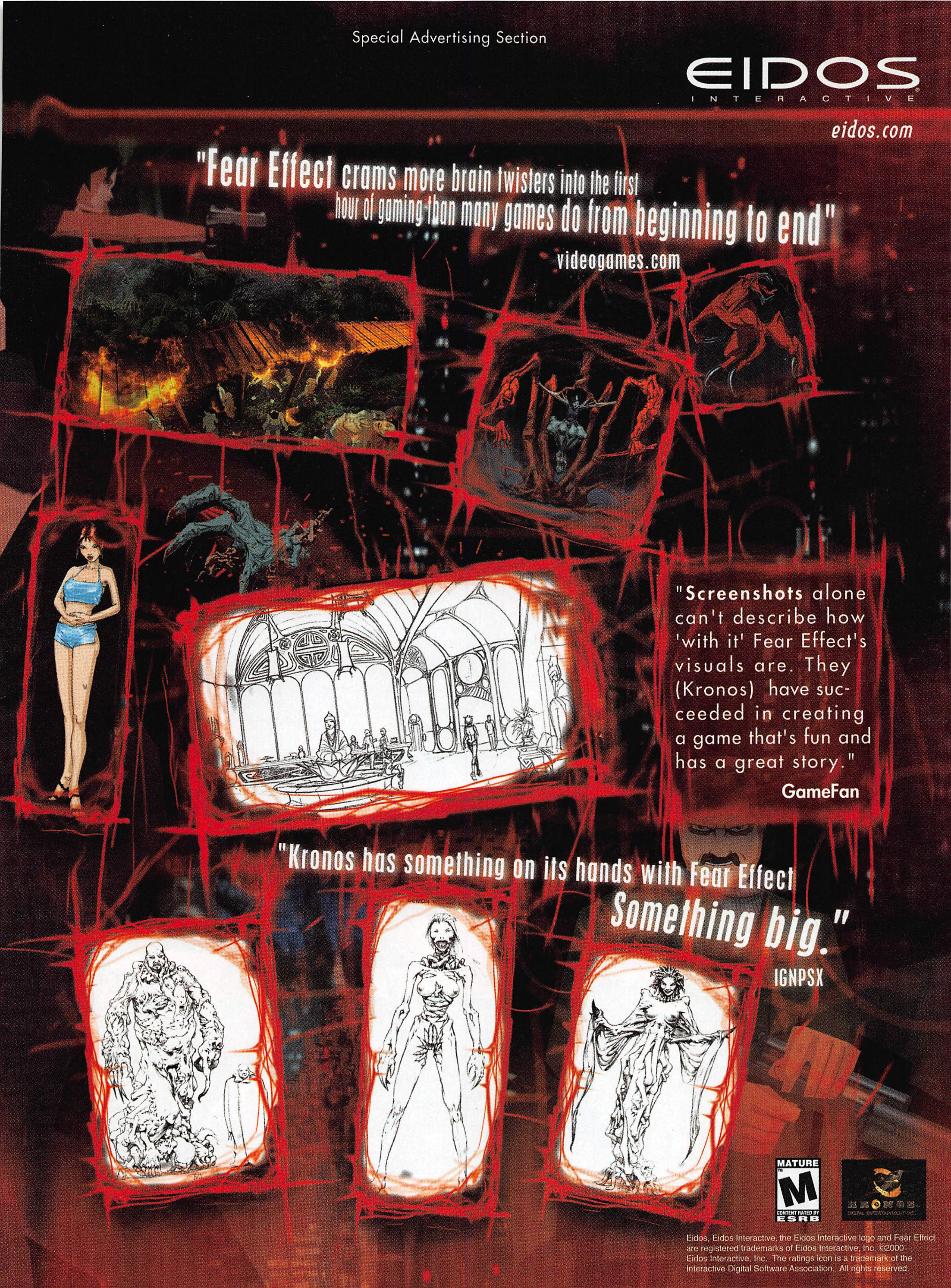
If you remember the end of the first game, you know that Rikimaru met a heroic demise on the wrong side of a cave-in. So how do you get over the loss of real-life ninja Sho Kosugi? Well, you make the sequel a *prequel* (though Activision still didn't get Kosugi to return as the voice of Rikimaru... "BOO!")—*Tenchu 2* takes place four years before the events of *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins*. In *Tenchu 2*, mysterious assassins murder Lord Gohda, forcing Ayame and Rikimaru to avenge their master in 20+ missions full of treachery and eviscerating action. Activision's even chosen to include a level editor (and henceforth address the biggest gripe of the original *Tenchu*: length), so you can mastermind your own sneaky environs and later save them to a memory card. There's also a junk-load of new features, such as dragging bodies, room traps, seven stealth kills and a hidden character. Oh, and more weapons, including blow darts, invisibility, and my personal favorite: the leaf-swirling teleport. That's all we have room for right now—I'll be back with the full review before this game sneaks on store shelves. "Namoooo..."

<Poof!> E

Developer - Activision	1 Player	EGGO: Perfect
Publisher - Activision	Available Summer	for a Ninja Gamer

P PREVIEW


fear effect
IT CAN RECOGNIZE YOUR FEAR...CAN YOU?
Kronos Digital Entertainment set out to not only create a technically ground-breaking action adventure game, but to also set the standard in story telling. Utilizing new techniques dubbed Motion FX technology, original anime style characters, and a twisting plot of greed, survival, and mistrust makes Fear Effect the must have game of 2000.
"There isn't a game in the PlayStation library that is more graphically innovative than Fear Effect. An absolutely captivating action adventure. Incredible graphics backed by a meaty story." 4 1/2 Stars PSM
"From the moment you pop in the first of the game's four disks, you'll be mesmerized." PS Extreme


Special Advertising Section
EIDOS
INTERACTIVE
eidos.com
"Fear Effect crams more brain twisters into the first hour of gaming than many games do from beginning to end"
videogames.com
"Screenshots alone can't describe how 'with it' Fear Effect's visuals are. They (Kronos) have succeeded in creating a game that's fun and has a great story."
GameFan
"Kronos has something on its hands with Fear Effect
Something big."
IGNPSX
MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
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Like the Judge and his unhealthy *EverQuest* addiction ("Hey guys, did ya see my *EQ* photo album of all the monsters I've fought… precious memories, guys, really"), I found myself battling my own inner demons—specifically, those of Naughty Dog's amazing PS kart racer *Crash Team Racing*. Though at heart *CTR* mimics the *Mario Kart* formula, it provided a more solid package (both in graphics and gameplay). I was convinced through and through that Naughty Dog had (with the introduction of *CTR*) single-handedly raised the kart-racing bar… then Sony brought *Speed Punks* by our office. "Man, this game looks frighteningly similar to *CTR*," I muttered. "Actually," chimed a Sony rep, "*Speed Punks* (*Speed Freaks* in Europe) was a huge hit abroad, and landed on European shelves long before *CTR* surfaced." Was it possible… could this little (an almost unheard of) gem be *CTR*'s immediate and closest relative/inspiration? Just when I was beginning to make headway with my therapist… "Tell me, Fury, what exactly was your role at the Wax Cart?"





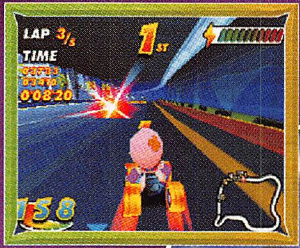
The kart racing field's not exactly a wide-open one. Sure, you can alter a title's look slightly ('cartoony' vs. 'ultra-cartoony'), but games like *Chocobo Racing*, *Bomberman Fantasy Race*, *South Park Rally* and *Diddy Kong Racing* are, at the end of the day, siblings (or twins, depending on the title). How, then, do you inject excitement into a genre that lacks any TRUE notion of originality? The answer—as *CTR* has proved—is likeable characters, insane track designs (jumps, it's all about MASSIVE jumps!) and decent control. *Speed Punks* isn't as pretty as *CTR*, and doesn't incorporate its stages quite as brilliantly, but FunCom (the developer of *Speed Punks*) has crafted the second most impressive PS kart racer I've seen.

Speed Punks is, more or less, standard cart racing fare atop one of the PS's better graphic engines. Nine adolescent characters resembling the cast of "Our Gang" (or "Little Rascals," for newbies), with *Rayman*-style anatomy (what we refer to as the 'Phantom Limb' syndrome), have gathered together to prove who's the TRUE *Speed Punk*. And, as expected, weapons play an integral role in the action, including homing missiles, bombs, slime, and machine guns, among others… Instead of jump or power slide boosts (as in *CTR*), *SP*'s levels are littered with dozens of Speed Boost Tokens that power your turbo meter. Again, nothing here's revolutionary; rather, it's a title chock full of heated gameplay and a bit of the ol' eye candy strewn about.



Like fighting games, car racers and RPGs, the world of kart racing on the PS is quickly becoming too crowded for its own good. Try and look past the Chocobos, Bombermans (man, that pains me to say!) and Cartmans—Sony's set to deliver FunCom's comical racer this April. Until then, I'd suggest taking your parent's car out for some early-morning power slides… I hear circa-1980 station wagons control a lot like a Mario Kart. **F**



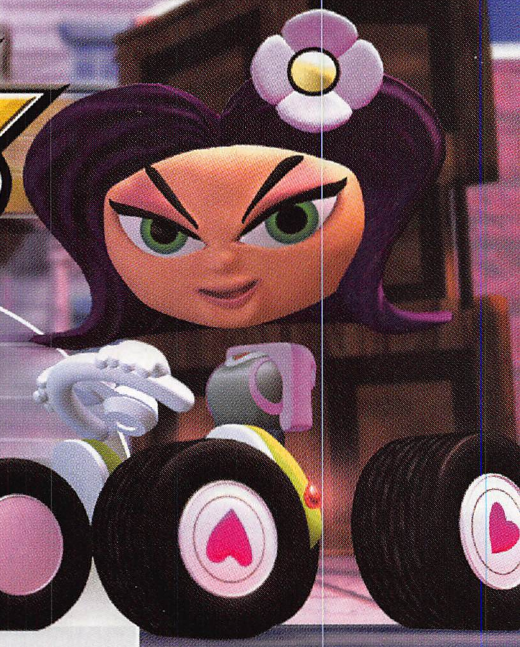


SPEED PUNKS









P PREVIEW	FURY: Do you feel lucky, punk? Well, do ya, punk?	Developer - FunCom	1-4 Players
		Publisher - SCEA	Available Apr '00









One of the brightest spots in the 1999 PlayStation lineup was *MediEvil*, a beautifully designed adventure game that blended immersive gameplay with imaginative levels and denizens. I honestly didn't think we'd ever see any further adventures of Dan Fortesque, because the game seemed to perform less than was expected. I was ecstatic, then, when I learned of its sequel. Sir Dan's finally back... but I still can't understand a word he says.

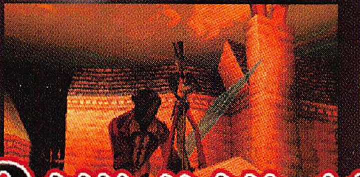
Centuries have passed since Sir Dan purged the world of evil and was able to lay his bones to rest... again. But no sooner does he become a resident of the London Museum than it's time to get dem bones a-rattlin' once more. Zarok's spell book falls into the hands of a nefarious occultist who unleashes hordes of the walking dead on London (not to be confused with the walking dead that already populate the city), and it's up to Daniel to stop them.

The good news is that *MediEvil 2* retains all the elements of its predecessor. Unfortunately, this might also include the lousy camera AI that made it difficult to play at times. This was *MediEvil*'s only troublesome area. The developers of *MediEvil 2* have been nice enough to include the option of rotating the camera with the L2 and R2 buttons, but sometimes there's just no alleviating the problem. Still, it's manageable, so I'll avoid harping on it too much...

It would've been easy for SCEE to let the sequel rely on the same gameplay mechanics as the first game, yet they've taken the time to add some new features to make *MediEvil 2* that much more fun to play. One of the most notable (and the only one without camera problems) is the 'Headless Dan' mode: Upon completing certain tasks, you'll be able to pop Dan's noggin off and set it on an animated hand to skitter about the levels and scope out the territory, all from a first-person perspective.

SCEE's also added some new moves, like climbing, pushing and pulling. I know, I know, horrifying images of box pushing (à la *Tomb Raider*) are flashing before your eyes... but fear not. These actions, coupled with some great puzzle elements, make for one engrossing game—and not a tedious one, I assure you.

MediEvil 2 will feature more of what you loved about the first *MediEvil*, plus a plethora of new features that are sure to excite gamers. I, for one, can't wait until I get a crack at the final burn. Sir Dan will finally be alive and kicking on my PlayStation for hours upon hours... again. J







Now you can get Medievil, II!



Developer - SCEE	1 Player	Judge: There's plenty of time to sleep
Publisher - SCEA	Available May '00	when you're dead... Oh, sorry, Dan.

P PREVIEW

Coming Soon

Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon



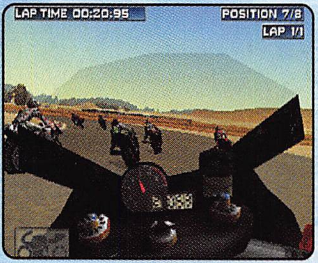
Superbike 2000

Developer
EA

Publisher
EA

1-2 Players
Available Summer

The racing genre already has its *Gran Turismo*s and *Need for Speed*s, but representation for two-wheel maniacs is sorely lacking. Man, there's just nothing like racing through Turn 12 on a 1200cc monster, with the wind in your face and bugs in your teeth... Well, EA did a great job with *Moto Racer*, and now, the company's at it again with *Superbike 2000*. Pictures don't lie—not usually, anyway—so just look at these shots! They make me wanna bust out some serious *Hang-On* action...







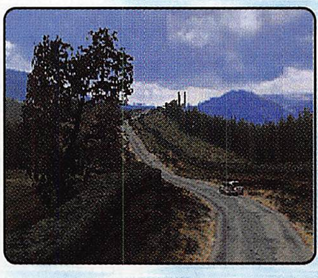
Mobil 1 Rally Championship

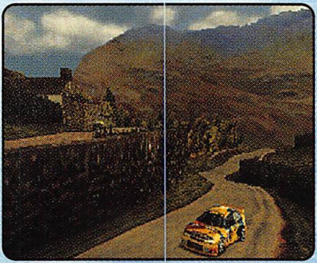
Developer
EA

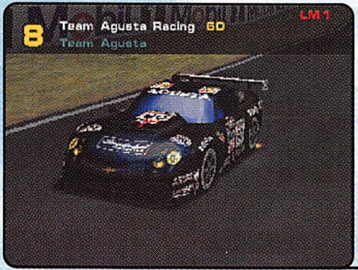
Publisher
EA

1-2 Players
Available Summer

Rally racing's taken the U.S. by storm—okay, more like 'by drizzle.' Nonetheless, with the growing popularity of cars like the Subaru Impreza and Outback, rally racing's quickly earning a serious following. With this in mind, EA's got another racer in the stable: *Mobil 1 Rally Championship*. So far, *Mobil 1* looks like another sure-fire hit for EA... Let's see how it stacks up against *Colin McRae*. I, for one, can't wait to see another quality dirt ride. I tell you, *Sega Rally* started something really special...







Test Drive Le Mans

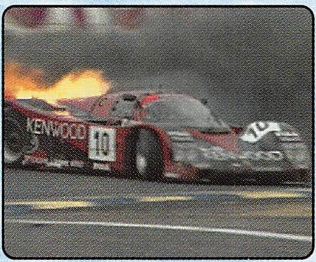
Developer
Infogrames

Publisher
Infogrames

1-2 Players
Available Summer

O.k., o.k., you're probably sick of racing games by now—but who doesn't wanna grab the wheel of a million-dollar bullet? The 24 Hours of Le Mans is a grueling road race, a true test of performance and stamina between McLaren, Audi, Porsche, Benz and any other manufacturer that can afford the hefty price of admission. If *GT2* (and every other racer out there) can't accommodate your expensive tastes, this might do the trick... Thus far, *Le Mans* is shaping up to be the best *Test Drive* yet; keep your fingers crossed.







Alone in the Dark IV

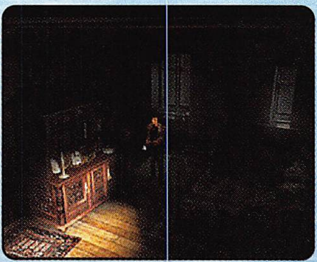
Developer
Dark Works

Publisher
Infogrames

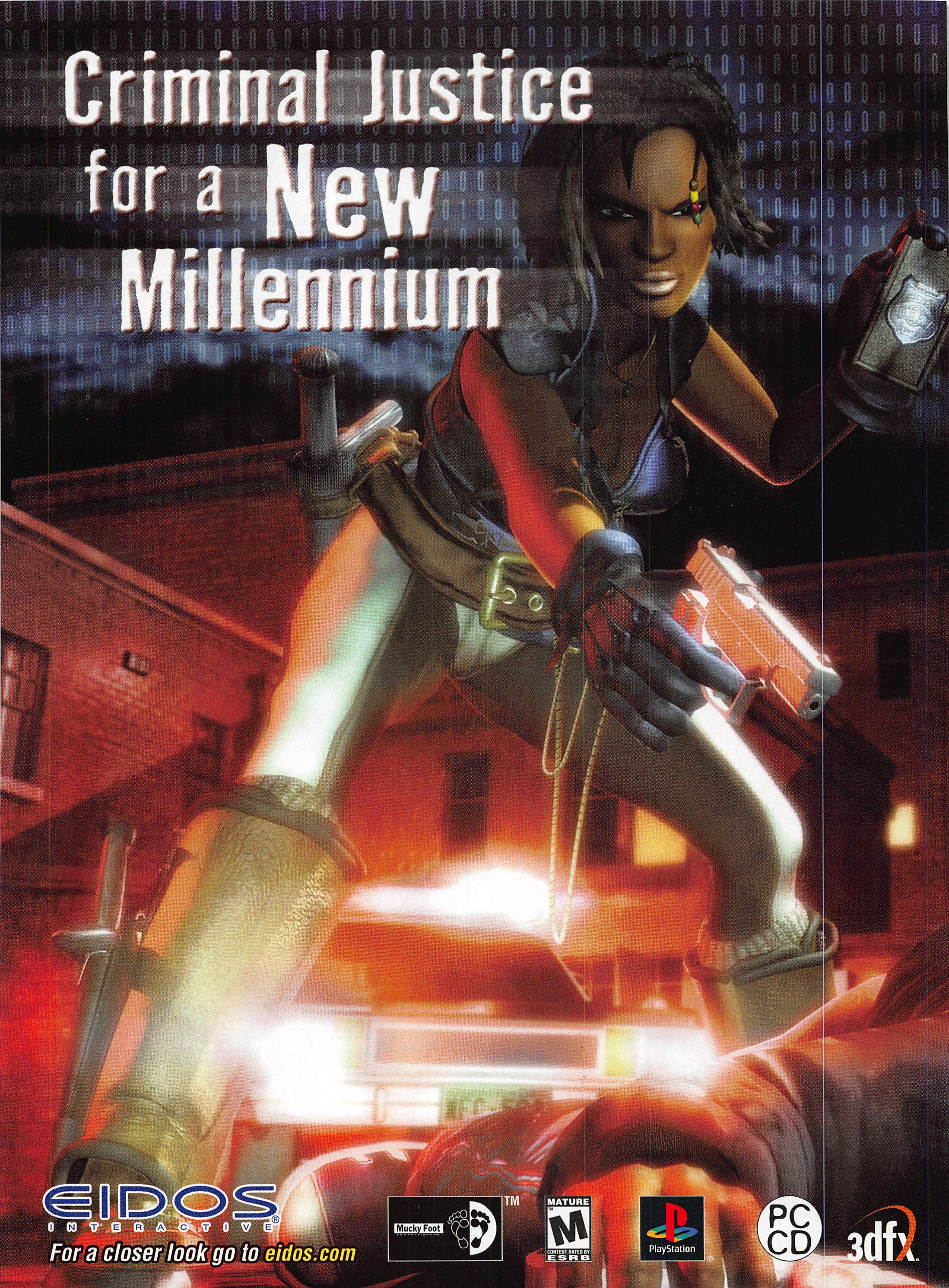
1 Player
Available Fall

The great granddaddy of survival horror's back to reclaim the throne, and French developer Dark Works may have the formula just right. *Dark IV* aims to flat-out terrorize—not unlike Konami's disturbing *Silent Hill*. This game's backdrops really look better than ever. The time away from *Alone in the Dark* must've given the team time to study the competition. Of course, much info has yet to be revealed, but from what we know, this fall may belong to the *Dark*.






WF
SMACK! DOWN!
BETRAYAL
HEARTACHE
TREACHERY
DECEIT
THEY DON'T FORGIVE.
AND THEY DON'T FORGET.
Lay the SmackDown! on your enemies with your own created jabroni or as one of the WF's top Superstars. Make friends then break them as you roam backstage from the boiler room to the kitchen. Just remember that backstage politics can work against you – don't let The Rock™ run-ins, well-placed metal chairs, and McMahon appointed guest referees get you in the end.
Huge Backstage Area
Special Guest Referee
4-Player Action
PlayStation
TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
SLUS-00927
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Criminal Justice
for a New
Millennium
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INTERACTIVE
For a closer look go to eidos.com
Mucky Foot
MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
PlayStation
PC
CD
3dfx

URBAN CHAOS™

Darkness falls over the city. Not the kind of darkness that comes with the absence of light, but rather the absence of good. And while many prepare to naively celebrate the new millennium, a small mysterious cult, known as "The Fallen", prepares to fulfill the dark promise of an evil prophecy. Yet, left standing between these "Fallen" ones is a rookie cop and a disillusioned ex-cop.

One woman...one man... one goal...survival.



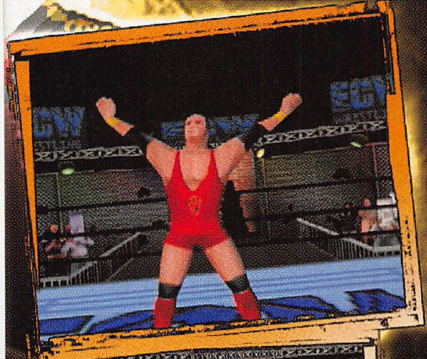


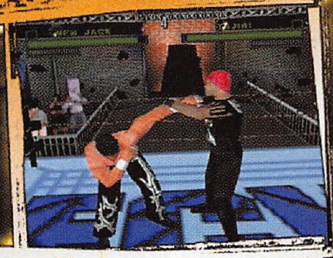
- Play 1 of 2 main characters - D'arci Stern - an agile, street-savvy female cop or Roper McIntyre - a mysterious ex-soldier.
- Multiple modes of combat. Engage in hand-to-hand fighting, heavy-weaponry face-offs, vehicle chases and building shoot-outs.
- Command a variety of vehicles. Take control of police cars, vans, motor-bikes, hang-gliders, ambulances, trains and helicopters.
- 3D volumetric fog, rain, snow, night and day simulation, wall-hugging shadows and real-time simulation of crashes enhance the atmosphere and action of the game.

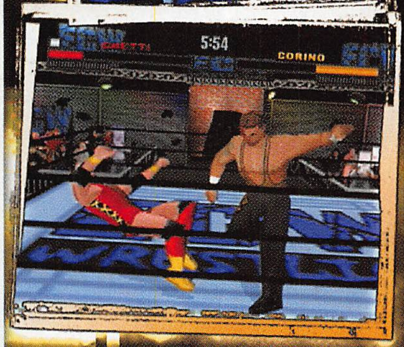








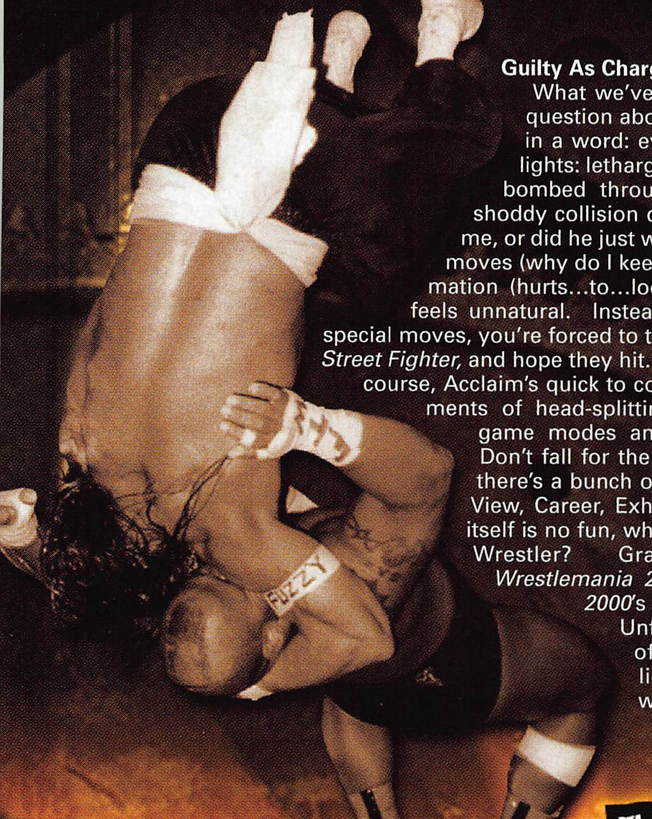




HARDCORE ECW REVOLUTION

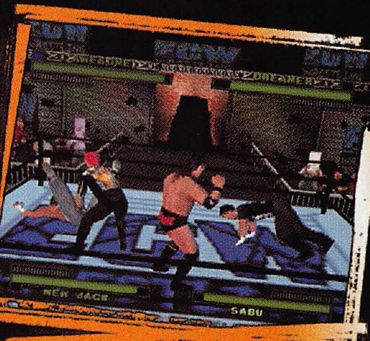
The NEW Game? More Like the Same Game!

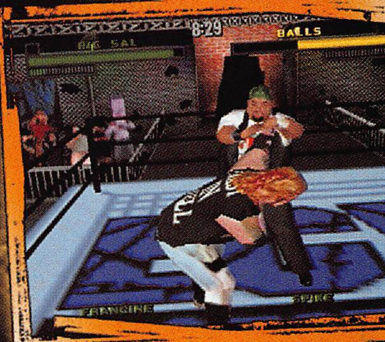
Where do I start with this game? Insulting? Despicable? Defacing a popular license? *WWF Attitude* was bad enough... and this game's just *Attitude Pt. 2.* Acclaim's simply taken the *WWF Attitude* engine, changed the characters and license, added some barbed wire and shoveled it onto store shelves to sell on name recognition alone. It's a shame, too, because the ECW license is awesome (more dangerous moves, barbed wire-wrapped rings and hardcore wrestling moves without the spectacle of the family-friendly WWF), and it deserves better than *ECW: Hardcore Revolution*... a lot better.

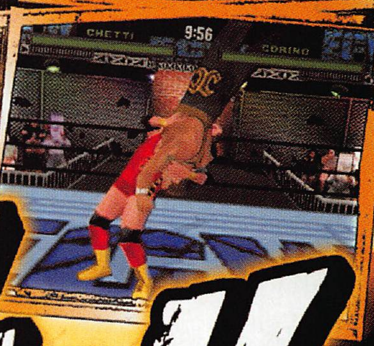


Guilty As Charged: Cash Run!

What we've got here, folks, is a blatant cash run—no question about it. What exactly is wrong with it? Well, in a word: everything. But I'll just touch on the highlights: lethargic control (it plays like you've been powerbombed through a table from the third turnbuckle), shoddy collision detection (is that cheese-grater getting to me, or did he just walk through my body?), limited wrestling moves (why do I keep getting an arm bar?) and robotic animation (hurts...to...look...). Even performing the moves feels unnatural. Instead of grappling, then launching into special moves, you're forced to throw out moves from a distance, like *Street Fighter*, and hope they hit. What kind of gameplay is this?!? Of course, Acclaim's quick to cover all that up with glossy advertisements of head-splitting, chair-smashing action! Twenty game modes and a cool Create-a-Wrestler feature? Don't fall for the hype or the tempting license. Sure, there's a bunch of game modes to get lost in (Pay-Per-View, Career, Exhibition, etc.), but when the wrestling itself is no fun, what have you got? A detailed Create-a-Wrestler? Granted, this feature's decent, but *Wrestlemania 2000* is better. In fact, *Wrestlemania 2000*'s a much better game in all aspects. Unfortunately, it doesn't have the appeal of the barbed wire-wrapped ECW license—but it's still the best domestic wrestling game on the market.

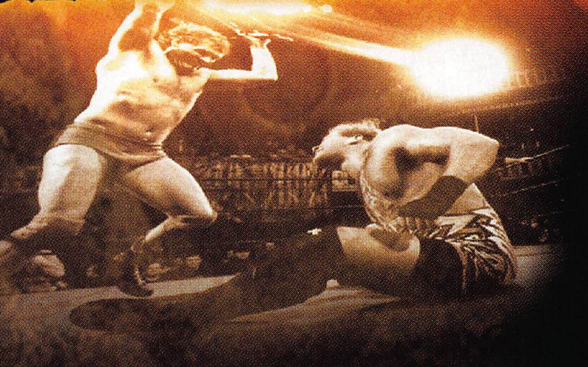






homicidal, genocidal, suicidal!!





Living Dangerously? Hardly.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment of this game is that it doesn't adequately reflect the adrenaline rush of watching ECW on television. Yeah, there are tables in the game, but here, they're wielded as standard weapons (like a bat or a kendo stick). You can't actually *do* any of the cool things you see in ECW, like laying an opponent out on that table and landing a DDT on him off the top rope. You can't run up a chair and flip into the crowd to land an elbow smash on your opponent. That's the spirit of ECW, and this game doesn't let you do any of that. It's like spitting on the memory of a loved one.

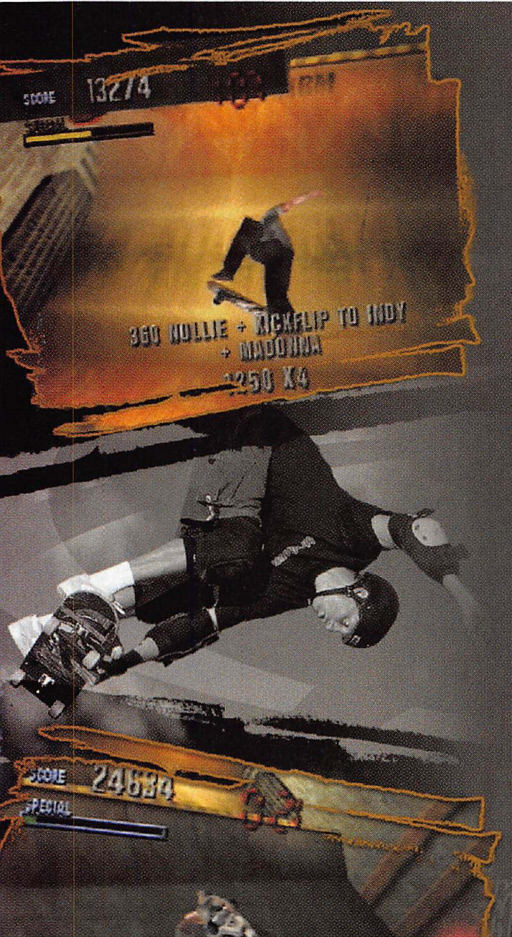
Suicidal, Homicidal, Genocidal... If You Buy It.

There's no way I can recommend spending any money on this game. Even if you're curious about renting it, do yourself a favor and take my word for it—you don't want any part of this. If you're foolish enough to shell out some bones for this waste of plastic, I swear I'll drop an Asai Moonsault on you from the second rope and knock some sense into you. What does it take? Chairs? Bats? I'm trying to help you out here... Stay far, far away from the box, lest you be tempted to pick it up with visions of drop kicks through chairs and ladder-smashing action. You're sure to be disappointed. *ECW: Hardcore Revolution* plays like a dog. Time to put it to sleep...

Eggo would rather wrap his body in barbed wire and slam himself against the wall than play this game.

Viewpoint Score	:50	Developer - Acclaim	1-4 Players	Eggo: I'll 'Tornado DDT' you off the
		Publisher - Acclaim	Available Now	top turnbuckle if you buy this game!

R REVIEW



Video game ports are notoriously bad—well, generally, not as good as the originals. As hard as a conversion team may try, ports usually fail to re-present the fun and excitement of Buzz Lightyear beating up a bandolier-clad baddie. Then there are the ups and downs a developer has to deal with when yanking a game from one platform to the next (mind you, that's before the game's taken off a CD and crunched back onto a cartridge). There's almost always going to be a loss of sound and video sequence quality when a CD sector is replaced by a chip. The sad truth is just that too much can go wrong... If the sacred balance isn't maintained—well, no one's going to play a lesser version of the same game.

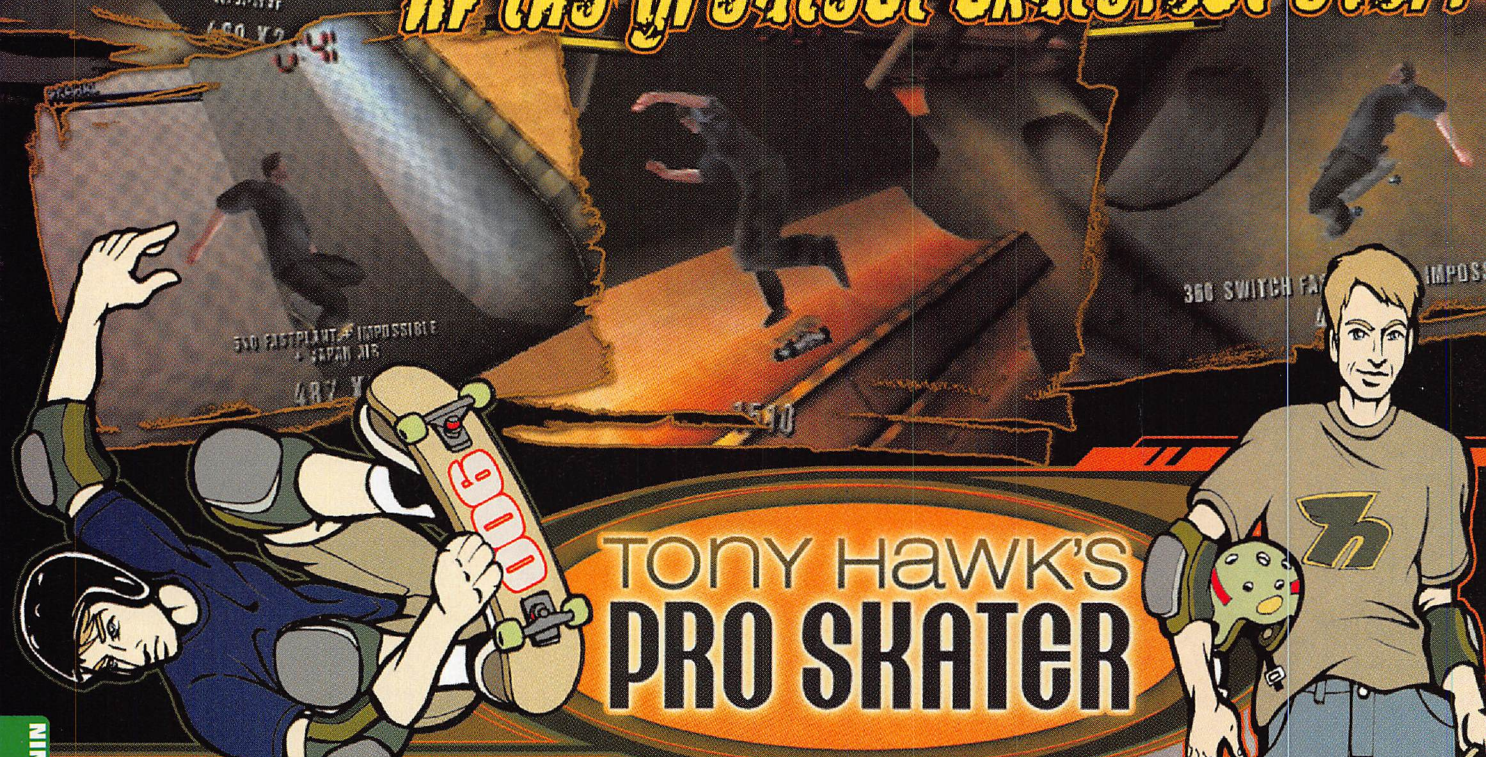
Fortunately, *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* for the N64 maintains that balance, retaining the essential graphics and control that made the original famous. Everything—all its venues, every rail and curb—looks fantastic, with or without the Expansion Pak (no lie). The Nintendo Blur-o-Vision (patent-pending) has been greatly reduced with some better-than-average textures. Not only is the frame-rate a solid 30 per second in single- and multi-player modes, but the resolution's also taken a turn for the better with the handy-dandy, better-for-eye-candy Expansion Pak.

As for the 'trick' front, well, nothing could be better. The usually pathetic N64 controller mimics the PlayStation D-pad spot-on. Sure, the buttons feel different, and there's that cumbersome analog thumb stick, but 'Benihanas' and 'Sex Changes' have never been easier. The same goes for combo moves... 'But what about the sound,' you ask? Howza 'bout I tell you that Goldfinger and a number of other top-name artists are in the mix, with—here's the shocker—full lyrical tuneage? Pretty cool, huh? And Joey Kuras' sound effects also make it across the bridge safe and sound (pun very intended).

That's a pretty amazing score down there, wouldn't you say? How often does a port net a viewpoint score equal to its real-deal counterpart? Not very often, but I could be wrong. Then again, it's not too often that a game of this caliber isn't an exclusive gig. *THPS* caused quite an upset when it managed to hang in with the big PS boys over the Christmas holiday, and, much to the chagrin of Fun Machine maniacs, it remained a PlayStation exclusive—until now. The folks at Edge of Reality have been given the chance to take that Tony Hawk magic and port it over to the N64. You can breathe easily, knowing that the N64's done *THPS* justice. Here's another cart to add to the hit list of about 5 games. I could easily go on—it's like a whole new game, a whole new experience, and it's just as fun. Now, gimme my four-player DC version, and I'll be really happy...

Cerberus attached a tech deck to his PlayStation d-pad for that 'Top Skater' feel. It worked.

grind till you bleed in the greatest skatefest ever!



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

REVIEW CERBERUS: If only every port was this good...	Developer - Edge of Reality Publisher - Activision	1-2 Players Available Now	Viewpoint Score: 98

大刀 DAIKATANA

Though I generally try to avoid PC games at all costs ("What the hell does 'install' mean?!?"), titles like *Quake II* and *Unreal Tournament* tend to run rampant around the GameFan office (much to ECM's chagrin, mind you). Sure, I can appreciate *UT*'s awesome graphics (especially on a Voodoo3), but a keyboard-and-mouse combo is no substitute for an N64, PlayStation or Dreamcast pad. Still, while recent titles like *Maken X* (import DC) and *Medal Of Honor* (PS) have proven that an FPS can definitely kick ass on a home console, the N64 (save for *GoldenEye* and *Quake II*) has never truly shone in this department. It's pretty much a sure bet that *Perfect Dark* will change this, but by the same token, Rare's bound to set a new standard in console-based first-person shooters. Can Kemco's port of John Romero's long-overdue *Daikatana* possibly stand strong in Joanna Dark's shadowy wake?

If you're unfamiliar with John Romero, here's a brief rundown: Romero previously worked alongside id Software's wonder boy John Carmack as a level designer on *Doom* and *Quake*. Romero made millions in the process (can you say Ferrari F50?), and left id to pursue his own brainchild—Ion Storm, which is the company responsible for *Daikatana* on PC. The PC version was announced years ago, when I was just a boy, and has yet to surface. Now—years later—in its stead, I'm staring at a near-complete version of *Daikatana* for the N64.

Now, I realize this is just a preview, but let's end the comparisons to *PD* right here—these games have about as much in common as *Street Fighter* and *Deadly Arts*... wait, maybe that was a bit too harsh. I just wouldn't say *Daikatana*'s a revelation in terms of first-person shooters. In its current state, it certainly shows promise—but at no point will it redefine the genre. Moving on...

Daikatana's story is quite ambitious for an FPS. The game's hero, Hiro Miyamoto (wow, that sounds fairly redundant), learns that the world he inhabits is shrouded in deep lies, all because of one man: Kage Mishima, *Daikatana*'s equivalent of Bill Gates. Mishima has his ruthless hands embedded in the world's commerce. He's beyond rich, and utterly powerful, all because of an ancient artifact he's stolen—the Daikatana. This mysterious weapon is more than a mere katana—it can rip through the very fabric of time. After Mishima successfully makes off with the Daikatana, he travels back into the past and steals the cure to a disease plaguing millions in the game's present. He returns to reap the benefits of the cure, and comes one step closer to world domination—if only it weren't for Hiro. Only Hiro can wield the *Daikatana*, unveil the secrets behind Mishima's fortune and restore truth to his home world.

Graphically, *Daikatana* employs some nice lighting effects, and the weapons... well, let's just say Romero's had a bit of practice in this category. If Kemco can just address the frame-rate problem (*Turok 2*'s Expansion Pak issues spring to mind), *Daikatana* might very well become a solid title for the aging N64. The FPS floodgates are about to open on the Fun Machine with the upcoming *Perfect Dark*, *Turok 3* and *Daikatana*... prepare to grab a cart and hang ten. **F**



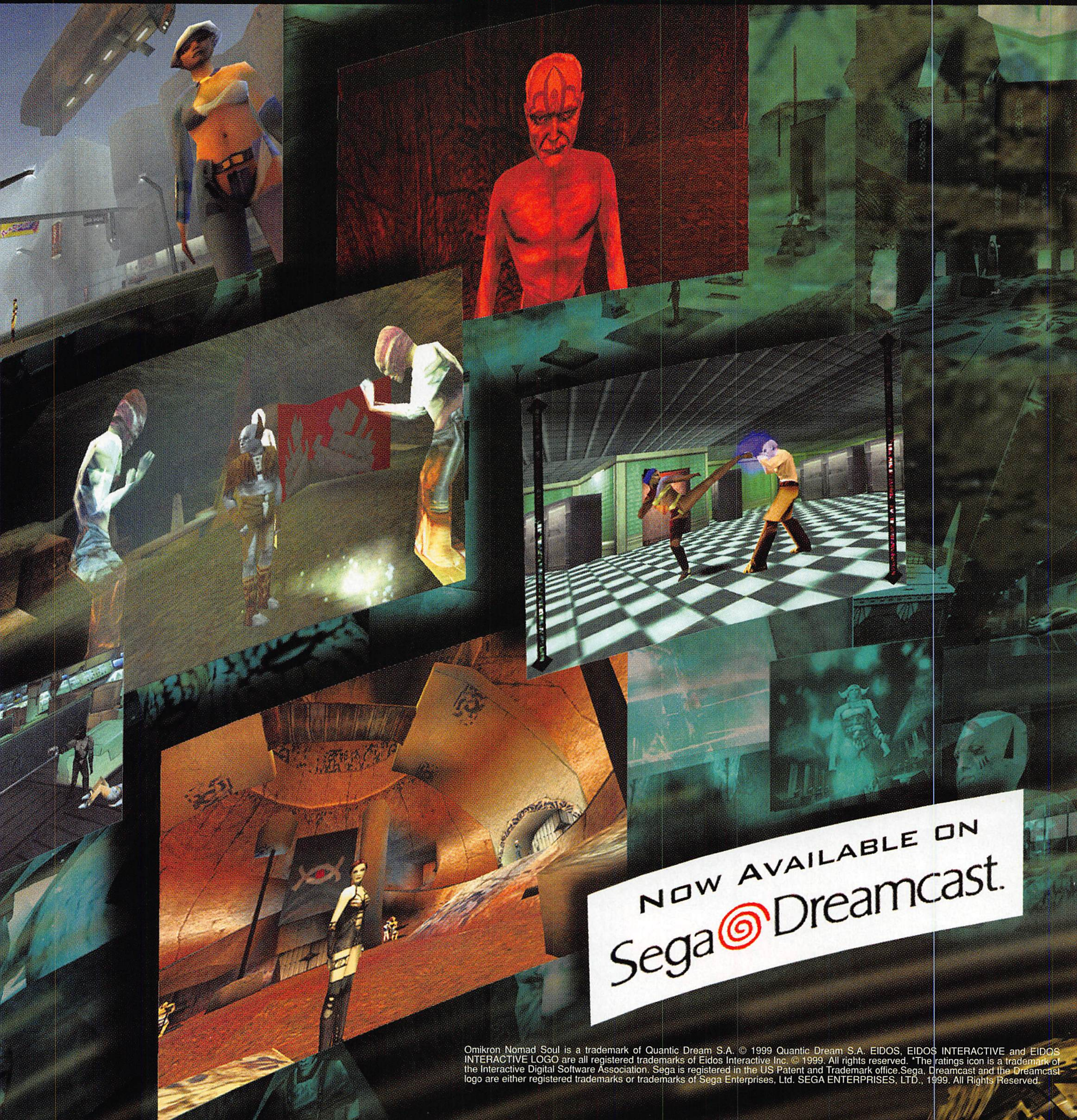
Developer - Kemco	1-4 Players	Fury: I was just a boy when
Publisher - Kemco	Available Someday	Daikatana was announced...

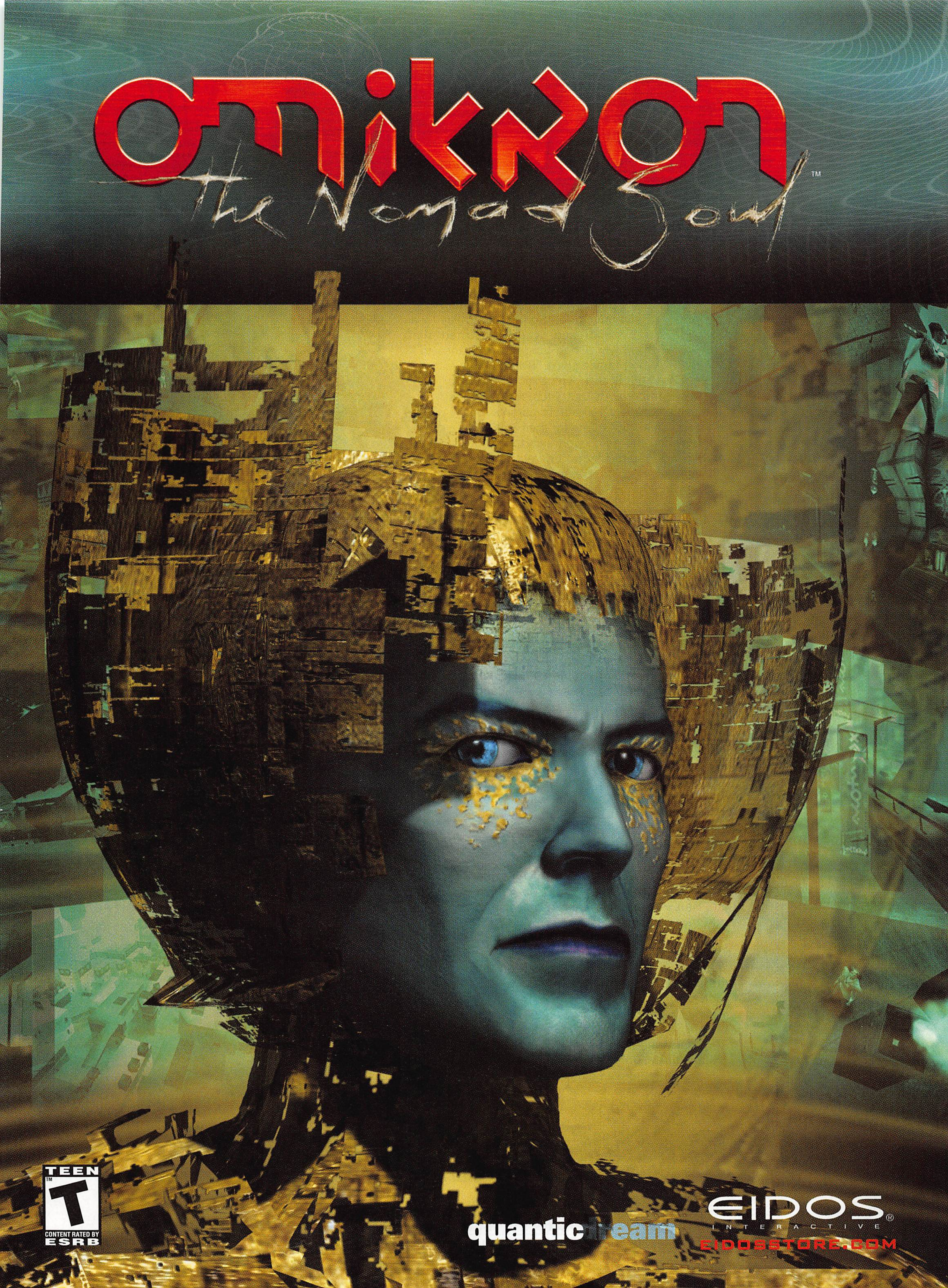
P PREVIEW

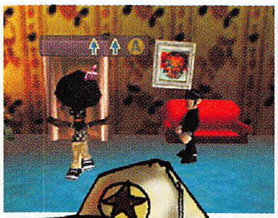
WHO WILL YOU BE AFTER YOU DIE?

IF YOU THINK YOU'VE FIGURED IT ALL OUT, THINK AGAIN. PARALLEL UNIVERSES, VIRTUAL REINCARNATION, ZEN-LIKE ODYSSEYS. IT'S ALL NEW. IT'S ALL OMIKRON. EMBARK ON A SPIRITUAL MISSION TO SAVE SOULS FROM THE DARK SEDUCTION OF A DECADENT DIMENSION. ALL WITHOUT FALLING TO COUNTLESS TEMPTATIONS YOURSELF. ADVENTURE, EXPLORATION, COMBAT AND ROLE-PLAYING. AND THAT CONTINUES EVEN AFTER YOU DIE. OMIKRON, IS NOT JUST A GREAT GAME. IT'S AN EXPERIENCE. <CORRECTION> IT'S AN OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE.

TRAVEL TO A NEW DIMENSION AT NOMADSOUL.COM



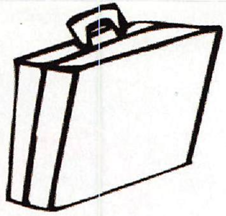

omikron
The Nomad Soul
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TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY
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quantic dream
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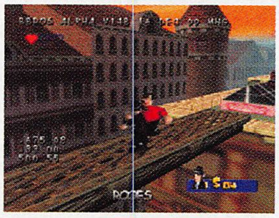


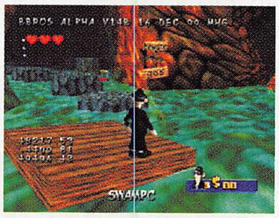




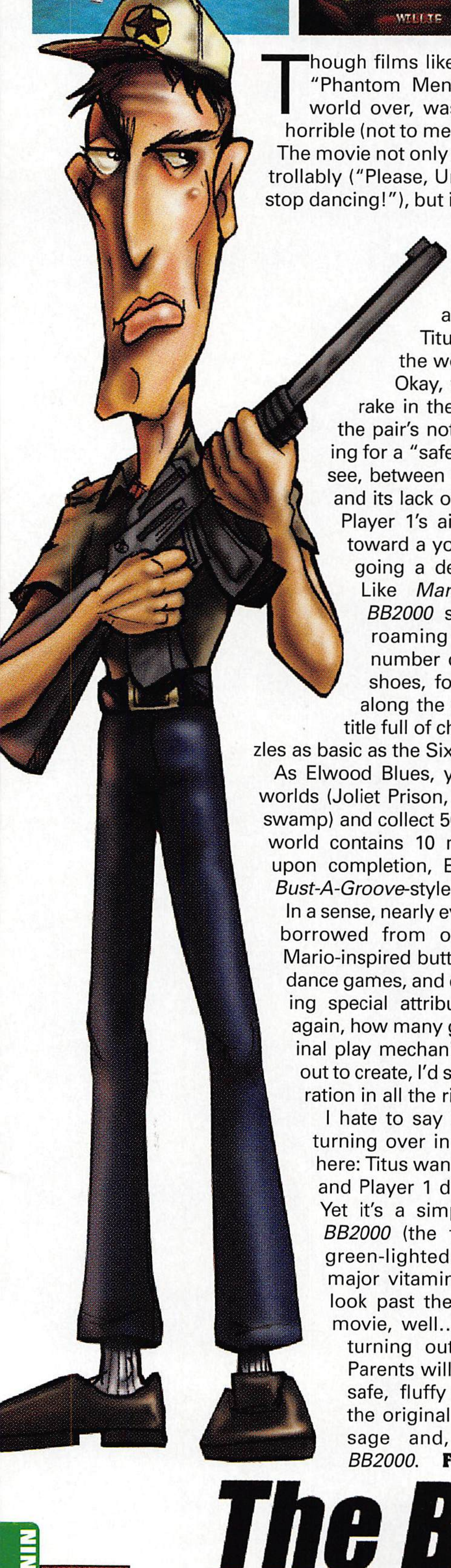














BLUES BROTHERS 2000

Though films like Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut" and Lucas' "Phantom Menace" have received mixed reviews the world over, was there really ANY question about how horrible (not to mention *wrong*) "Blues Brothers 2000" was? The movie not only made my little nephew Timmy cry uncontrollably ("Please, Uncle Fury, make the middle-aged fat men stop dancing!"), but it garnered about $180 at the box office as well—that's domestic gross, mind you... Somehow, I doubt this was the future John Belushi envisioned for the dynamic duo. So it's safe to say I was a bit confused when I learned that Titus/Player 1 had landed the license to the worst movie since "Robot Jox."

Okay, the license isn't exactly going to rake in the crowds, but Titus sure believes the pair's notoriety will attract parents looking for a "safe" N64 game for their kids. You see, between the game's ultra-cartoony look and its lack of difficulty or any real carnage, Player 1's aimed to create a title skewed toward a younger audience, without foregoing a decent set of play mechanics. Like *Mario 64* and *Banjo-Kazooie*, *BB2000* sports some expansive free-roaming 3D environments with a number of abilities and items (speed shoes, for example) to be picked up along the way. But, again, this isn't a title full of challenging tasks—rather, puzzles as basic as the Sixth Man's vocabulary.

As Elwood Blues, you must explore four huge worlds (Joliet Prison, Chicago, a graveyard and a swamp) and collect 500 coins littered about. Each world contains 10 musical notes, as well, and upon completion, Elwood must compete in a *Bust-A-Groove*-style mini-game.

In a sense, nearly everything in this game's been borrowed from other titles, from Elwood's Mario-inspired butt bounce to the 'Simon Says' dance games, and even *Kazooie*'s game of gaining special attributes along the way. Then again, how many games truly incorporate original play mechanics? For what Player 1's set out to create, I'd say they certainly found inspiration in all the right places!

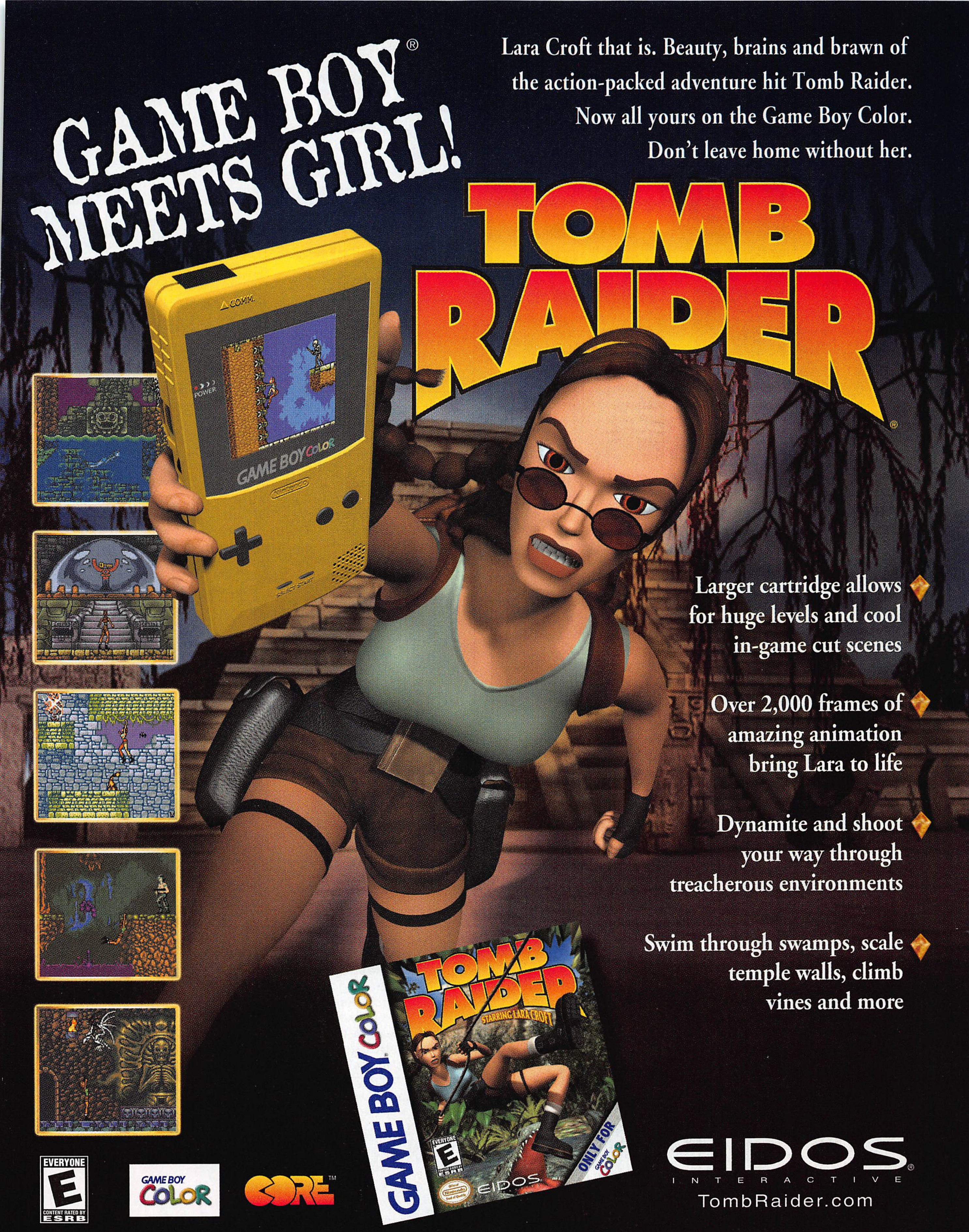
I hate to say it, but Mr. Belushi must be turning over in his grave. Let's be honest here: Titus wanted to produce a kid's game, and Player 1 delivered—no harm, no foul. Yet it's a simple truth that if Belushi were alive, *BB2000* (the film) would never have been green-lighted... unless he was on a major vitamin binge. So if you can look past the horror that was the movie, well... the game's actually turning out to be eons better. Parents will take one look at the safe, fluffy graphics, remember the original film's positive message and, most likely, buy *BB2000*. F





The Blues are back!

P PREVIEW			
	FURY: Blues Brothers... Y2K compliant?	Developer - Player 1 Publisher - Titus	1 Player Available 2nd Qtr.


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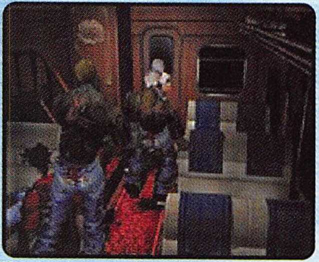
Resident Evil Zero

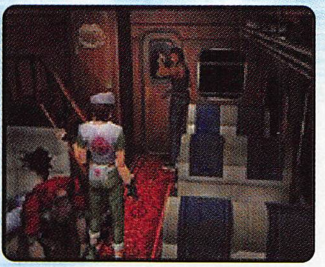
Developer
Capcom

Publisher
Capcom

1 Player
Available Winter

If you thought N64 owners were lucky to get a mere rehash (though an awesome conversion, mind you) of *Resident Evil 2*... think again! *RE*: *Zero*'s being tailored from the ground up around the Fun Machine's hardware—I repeat, it is NOT a port. And unlike *Ridge Racer 64*, which was developed by Nintendo in lieu of Namco, expect *Zero* to scream (or moan—this is an *RE* game, after all) "Capcom" through and through.





Aidyn Chronicles



Developer
THQ

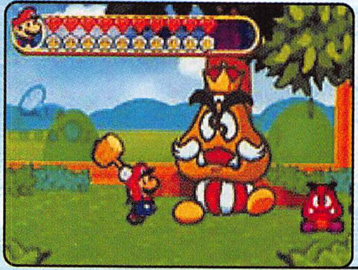
Publisher
THQ

1 Player
Available Fall

It's a safe bet that *Zelda: Mask of Mujula* will be every bit as enthralling as *Ocarina of Time*—but with a scheduled release date in November, what's an RPG fanatic to do? Well, if you thought THQ's *Quest 64* was an appropriate "tide me over" RPG till *OOT* surfaced, wait till you check out its second role-playing endeavor: *Aidyn Chronicles*. This one looks to have a more serious tone: The all-too-common N64 cartoony look's been jettisoned in favor of a grittier *Dungeons & Dragons* look.







Super Mario Adventure

Developer
NCL

Publisher
Nintendo

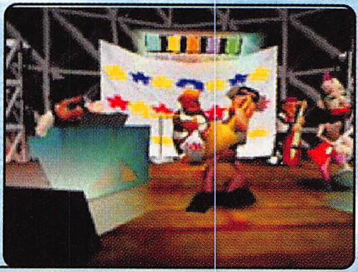
1 Player
Available Winter

The original Mario RPG on SNES was embraced by both the hard-core crowd and novices the world over. Can the sequel possibly deliver the amazing gameplay found in its predecessor? Three words: Nintendo In-House. That's right—it's time to raise those expectations, because few N64 carts sing like the Big N's do. And if it's awesome visuals you're after, look no further! Mario and company shine in brilliant cookie-cutter-like 2D graphics. 2D?! Thank you, NCL!





Earthbound

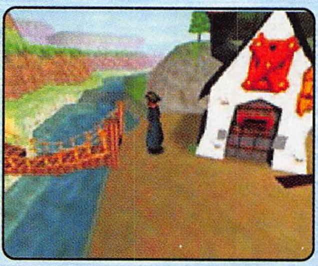


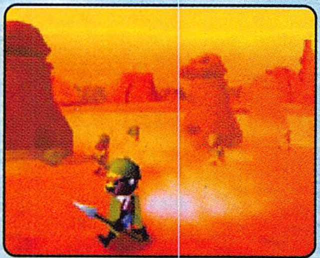
Developer
NCL

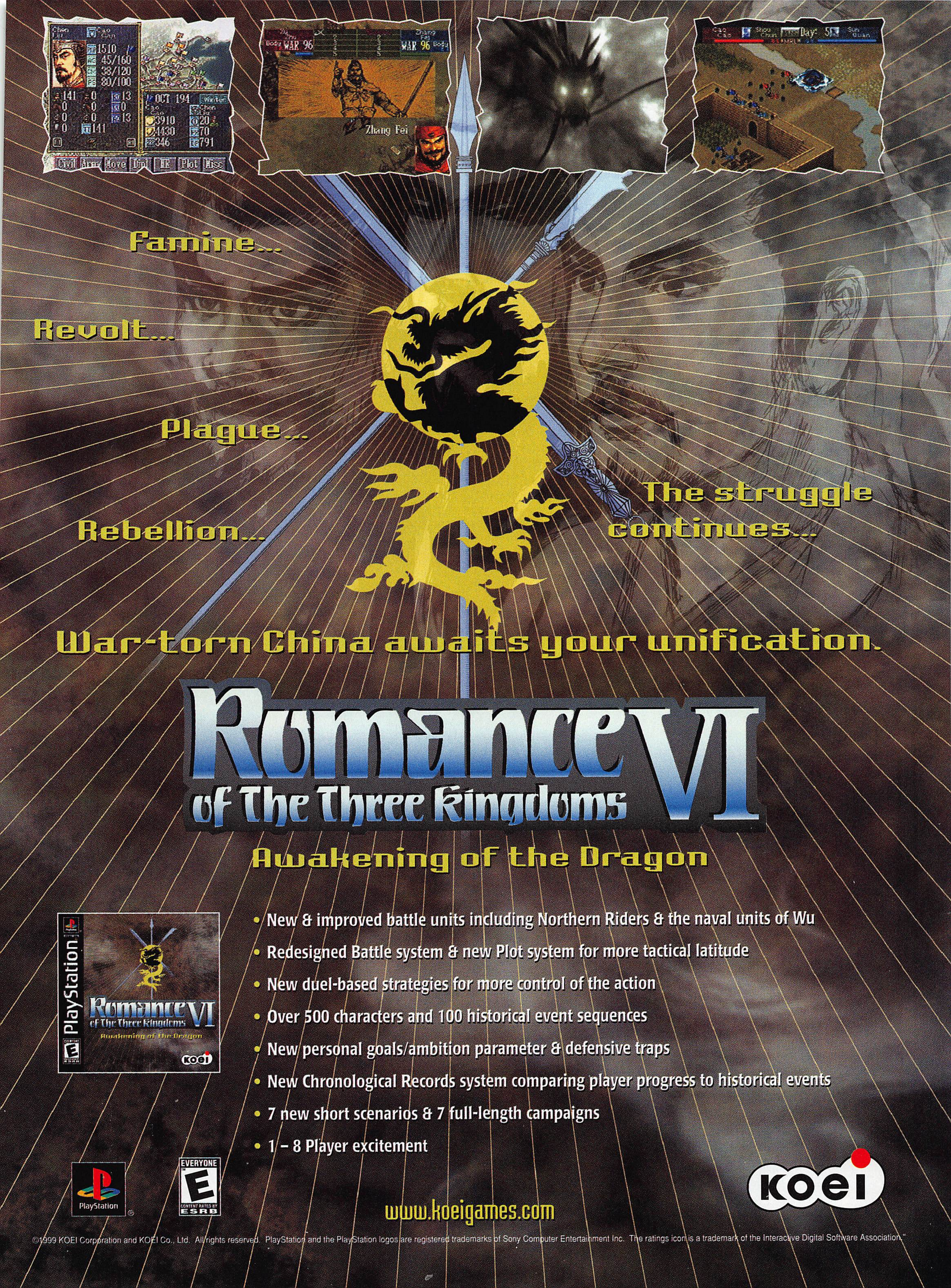
Publisher
Nintendo

1 Player
Available Winter

Luckily for Nintendo-heads, this completely unique and frighteningly addictive RPG (made famous on the SNES) has been saved from a painful 64DD death. Sure, it's been a loooong time in the making, but the magic of *Earthbound* has finally found its way onto a mere N64 cartridge—makes ya wonder how "necessary" the DD was in the first place. *Earthbound* might not be your typical RPG, but its odd gameplay and even stranger graphics make it one to look out for.





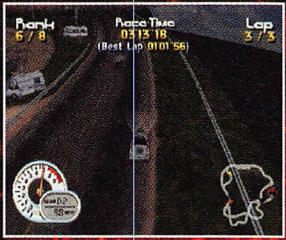


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• New duel-based strategies for more control of the action
• Over 500 characters and 100 historical event sequences
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Long before *Gran Turismo* surfaced, sparking a new breed of ultra-realistic tuning sims, arcade-style racers dominated the market. On one side of the spectrum, you had the absolute cream of the crop: games like *Ridge Racer,* and my personal favorite, *Daytona USA.* Far on the other side (we're talking the distance from, say, California to Alaska) are titles that fall into some sort of ill-fated, mediocre limbo, littered with *San Francisco Rush, Need For Speed* and a sea of poorly crafted clones. Let's be realistic here—for every *Super GT* or *Racing Jam* produced, at least three or four *Test Drives* or *Cruis'n*-style racers hit arcades and retailers' shelves.

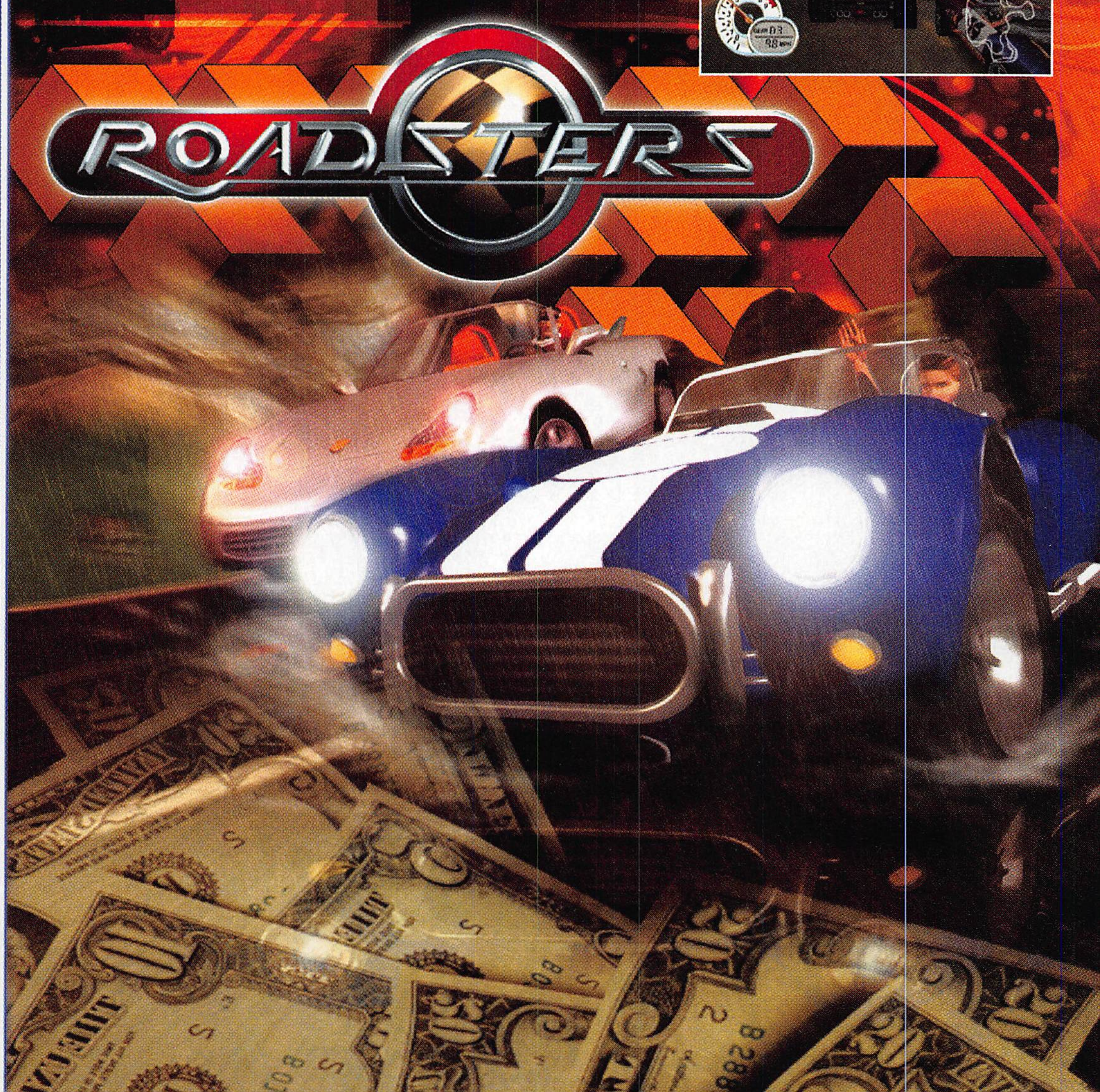
Sadly, the same holds true on Sega's super console—especially with the ease of PC-to-DC ports (Windows CE is my friend...). Sure, I can appreciate awesome arcade-to-DC ports (hey, the Saturn was more or less an arcade machine), but just ask yourself: Would you rather play *Sega Rally 2* or *Speed Devils...*? I think I've said enough.



Ever heard this one before: "Well, it's got better-looking textures than the N64 rev!" Or how about: "At least the car models are detailed!" Believe me, if you're a developer, this is NOT what you want to hear gamers say about your product. But somehow—and understand that I've given myself El Niño-sized migraines attempting to get to the root of this insanity—mediocre games sell... a lot. And worst of all, as major companies release multiple versions of their games (cough, Midway, cough) on nearly every platform (and make some major dough in the process!), a developer's real, driving point in making a port truly stand out seems to be lost... and I'm not simply talking about texture quality.



No, Player 1... say it ain't so. Why *Roadsters* on the DC, and not a blazing update to *Robotron X* or *Dead in the Water*? Why? Was I a bad gamer this year? Do I need to be punished? O.K., perhaps I'm being too harsh here. It's just that I expect a lot from the Dreamcast—and you should, too! Situations obviously arise in which a title's gameplay manages to outshine its graphics (*Chu Chu Rocket,* for example), but sadly, this doesn't hold true for *Roadsters.* It's definitely a decent game, but it was a decent game on the N64, and it's soon to be one on the PlayStation. What



gives? Where are my amazing 128-bit, eye-blistering visuals? If I wanted to play an N64 game, I'd wake up little Timmy and borrow his Fun Machine. That's it—I'm going to hold my breath till the tide turns and more DC games start living up to their potential. I'm feeling lightheaded here... darkness creeping in... images of *Blasto* all around...

Believe it or not, *Roadsters* DC is surprisingly not a port. Unfortunately, it resembles one in a big way. Again—and I absolutely hate to use this as some sort of fallback—it's got clean textures and bright colors <argh>. But that's it! If you've ever played a *Cruis'n* game, *Roadsters* is standard fare. But how do you play a *Cruis'n* game, Uncle Fury? Well listen, Toby: Keep that wheel pointed straight ahead and avoid those humongous obstacles. In *Roadsters*' case, those roadside hazards come in the form of everything from tornadoes to plane crashes. But the best part is when helpless passengers break out of the charred wreckage, screaming in flames... O.K., I made that one up. But could you imagine?

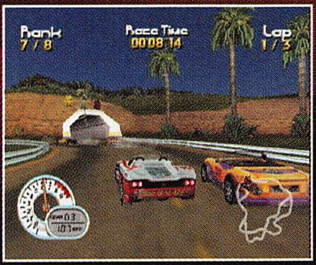
As the title suggests, the vehicle lineup in *Roadsters* is made up of... you'd never guess it in a million years... roadsters. But hey, if it's a Ferrari F50 or Lamborghini Diablo you're after, it's got those too (here, you'll find them under the names "Vinguiatti VM12 Super" and "Velocima Raptor"—they sound more masculine, don't they?). Of course, *Roadsters* does offer a full stable of licensed vehicles from Mitsubishi to Renault... if that's enough to secure a purchase for ya. What a concept: an entire game devoted to cars without roofs. Where in the world do they come up with this stuff? It's INGENIOUS! And the tracks—hold onto your hats—take you through such exotic locales as Area 51, a ski resort and the perpetually exciting Hoover Dam, among others. Finally, you'll have plenty of time to enjoy the scenery after you get a handle on the amazing control and vehicle physics, believe me—at least half of each race is spent in a frustrating attempt to correct your car's direction. Just don't take it out on your DC pad, man!

When Player 1 dropped by our office last month, they told us that it took less than a year to craft *Roadsters* on the DC. Though I'm certain they would've preferred a lengthier development schedule, the end result matches the time exhausted on the project. What can I say? Perhaps my view was skewed after I spent a good couple of days playing the incredible import version of *Sega GT*. But most likely, it's just a matter of recognizing a shoddy title... If it's a REAL arcade racer you're after, secure a copy of *Rally 2*—"easy left maybe!"

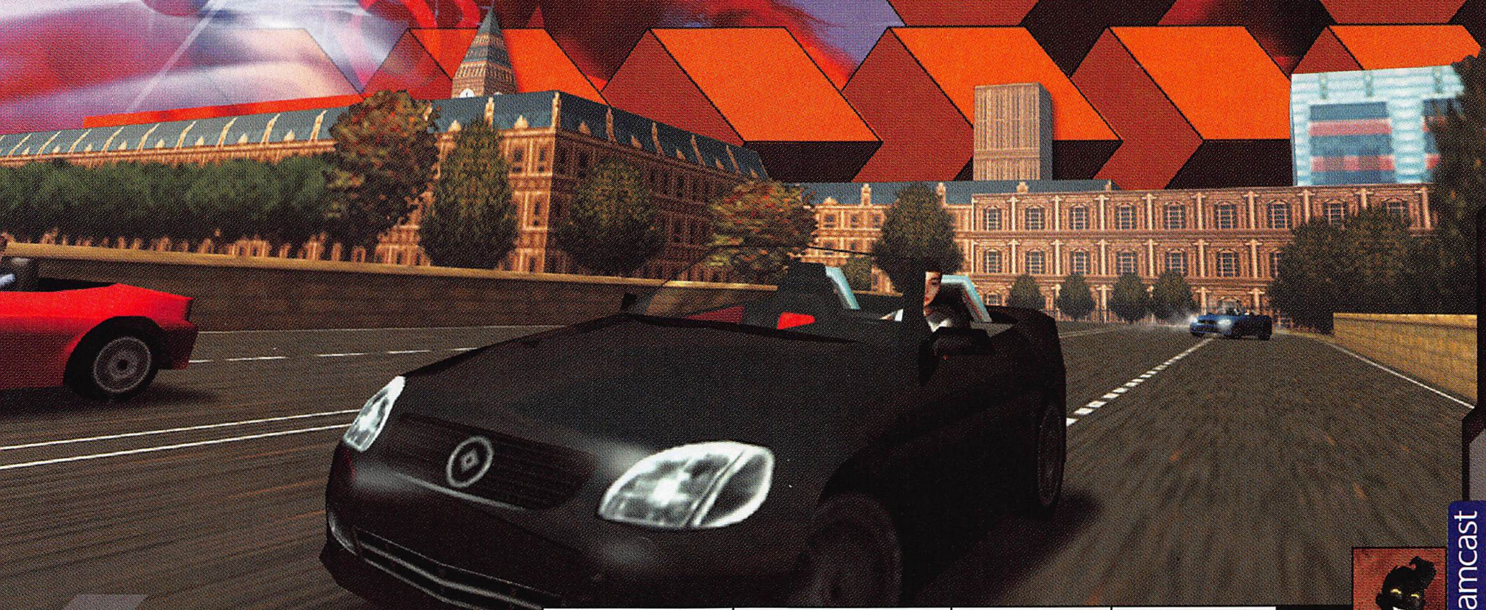
Fury recently discovered that smashing GD-ROMs could be a wonderful stress reliever.





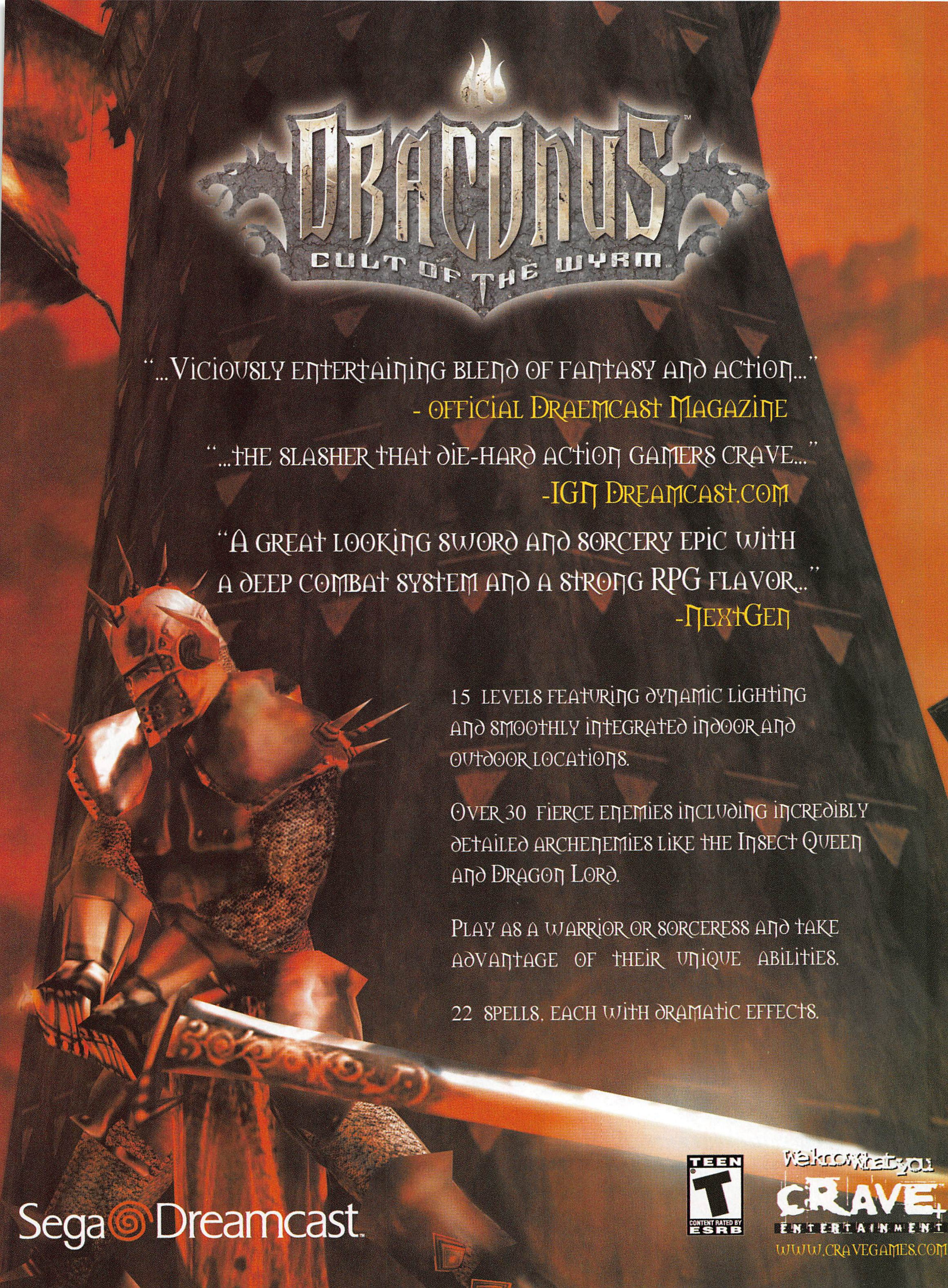






Viewpoint Score :60	Developer - Player 1	1-2 Players	Fury: A road less traveled...	R Review
	Publisher - Titus	Available Now		




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Fur Fighters





A little mirth, a little mayhem, a lot of stuffed animals—*Fur Fighters* (formerly *Furballs*) is an action shooter that looks like the "Muppet Babies" and plays like *MDK2*. You gotta love those Brits; who else would equip cute, cuddly critters with flamethrowers and rocket launchers?

Developer Bizarre Creations certainly puts a unique spin on the genre, but don't expect to find any earth-shattering originality in *Fur Fighters*. This is yet another action title that pits you against legions of hostile forces and a man (muppet?) named Viggo. Viggo's been stealing babies, the dastardly villain! And it's up to you to blast your way through his cronies and save all the li'l fellas you can (and maybe a mommy or two, while you're at it).

Fur Fighters employs what I call the "Nintendo formula." Much like *Jet Force Gemini* and *DK64*, you have the ability to control six different furry critters, each with his or her own special abilities. There's Roofus the dog, Bungalow the kangaroo, Juliette the cat, Chang the panda, Rico the penguin, and Tweak the dragon. Cute as buttons, one and all, until they pull out a gat and start firing. Each level has puzzles and obstacles that can't be traversed by any one of these characters. It'll be your job to switch between animals (using a series of teleporters) to successfully complete each level.

At this juncture, *Fur Fighters* is an impressive-looking title. The cuteness of the game has a certain charm, even for a sex-and-violence-monger like myself, and the arsenal available to the loving little critters is extensive and quite deadly (and quite pyrotechnic). Hey, pandas armed with bazookas are always funny... or so I've been told.

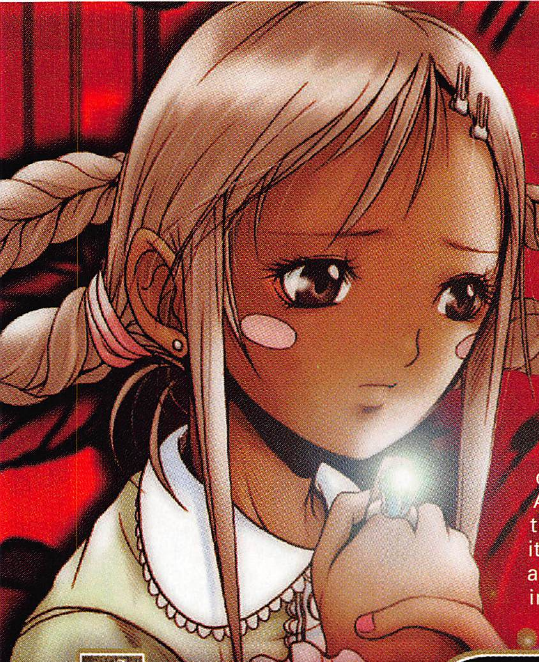
As the Dreamcast's library expands with a refreshing selection of original titles, *Fur Fighters* will fit in nicely. Bizarre Creations is doing an excellent job of making a game that all ages can enjoy; I just hope they add a "blood code" so I can see those fuzzy little Gund-wannabes explode into blood sausages. A muppet bleeding profusely from the head is even funnier than a panda with a bazooka... or so I've been told.

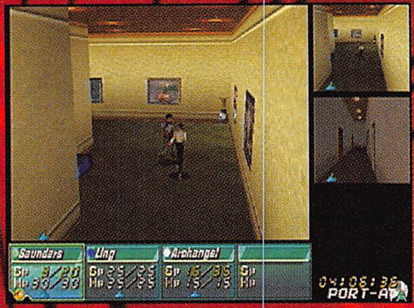
The Judge thinks Shidoshi's perfect for the job of GameFan's on-staff muppet rancher.



Developer - Bizarre Creations	1-2 Players	Judge: It's amazing the bizarre creations you can come up with when you have Mad Cow.
Publisher - Acclaim	Available 2nd Qtr.	

P PREVIEW

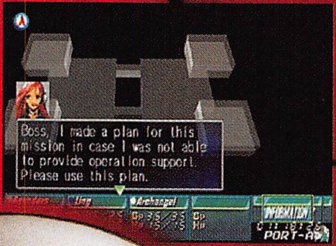




If you're anything like me, you probably watched "Mission: Impossible" and "The A-Team" (whatchu talkin' 'bout, foo'!?!) as a kid; if you didn't, you're probably too young to remember. I always wanted to be the point man, like Hannibal, or Phelps, giving every agent the most up-to-date 411. How cool would it be to watch a team of spies every step of the way? Well, this isn't something we have to keep wondering about—UFO's grabbed the rights to NEC's *EspionAgents,* and opted to bring it over here.

In a nutshell, you must guide up to four agents through a number of secret spy missions; the trick is that one agent with a specific skill may be the only person able to complete a certain task (like picking a lock or turning off an infrared sensor). Gabriel Archangel (nice pun, eh?) can hack into any computer he can get his mitts on, but don't throw him into battle—he's only ten years old. Kleopatra, on the other hand, can duel it out with the power of hypnosis. Then there's Saunders, a jack-of-all-trades... Other agent specialties include explosives, thievery (and, ergo, lock-picking), fighting, even in-line skating.

INDUSTRIAL I SPY
Operation Espionage™









Taking charge of an intrepid quartet won't be easy—not at first, anyway. Players control one individual agent, while a team camera gives a peek at their status at all times. Commands are basic—guide your agent toward a general, designated destination until a door, item, or enemy appears. A number of choices are then presented; you must choose one. It doesn't look easy—controlling all the agents, that is. I'm not going to fool you—it isn't easy—but I got the hang of it pretty quick.



Still, if it's too hairy for you to handle, all commands can be given through the Map sub-screen. There is no time limit in this screen—

TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION!

a nice touch for beginners. And while it doesn't hurt to have a map to look at, it would be more helpful if the map screen had more options, like a zoom function, locations of doors and traps—all the good stuff an up-and-coming spy needs to know.

I Spy is the only game on the Dreamcast to offer both spy fanaticism and novelty. It's a very distinct game... there's no other like it. The in-game graphics may not be to die for, but the artwork's excellent, and the control's better than average. Let's see how this one shapes up, and maybe we'll see a sequel of it on the PlayStation 2. **C**





P PREVIEW	CERBERUS: WHERE ARE YOU, MR. PHELPS?	DEVELOPER - HUNEX	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - UFO	AVAILABLE JUN '00

GameFan interviews Robb Canfield

President of Canfield Research Group and director of localization for I-Spy

GameFan: Can you please tell us about yourself? How long have you been in the game industry, what have you done, and what does your company do, overall?
Robb Canfield: I am the owner of Canfield Research Group. Our services include localization, design, management, and product evaluation. We have been involved in the game industry since 1998, evaluating games for possible distribution in the U.S., and assisting with the localization of titles. Recently, we helped with the development of *Lode Runner 64* (Nintendo) and, of course, we did the translation and localization of *I Spy*.

GF: What kind of games are you into?
RC: My favorite games have excellent story lines, like *Half-Life*, or are multi-player strategic games with team play. *Age of Empires II* is my current addiction. We schedule modem play sessions as a way to unwind.

GF: How long did the localization take, from start to finish?
RC: It took my team six weeks, including play testing, translation, and QA.

GF: What were your initial impressions of I Spy, and what's your take on it after the project?
RC: We were impressed with its puzzle-solving and strategic elements. *I Spy* is not just a role-playing adventure, but also a shooter. Additionally, the player is challenged to select an effective team, taking advantage of the different personalities and capabilities of the agents.

GF: What was the most difficult obstacle you faced when trying to make I Spy accessible to U.S. players?
RC: Any translation from Japanese to English is challenging, but the localization of cultural elements requires much more work. Our goal was to translate not only the words but also the attitudes, personalities, and flavor of the characters from Japanese to English. That was particularly challenging, because the characters speak in distinct dialects and styles that don't transfer directly into American culture.





GF: Including you, how many people were on the team, and what were their roles?
RC: There were six people involved; I acted as project lead and game player, and we also had one game player/localizer who spoke Japanese and English (Q/A), three translators, and one editor to insure continuity, English quality, and character flow.

GF: Do you have any advice for players who want to do exactly what you're doing now?
RC: Love games, be open to other cultures, and be able to work as a team with others that can't speak your language fluently. It helps to have flexible hours; we spent much of this project living on Japanese time!

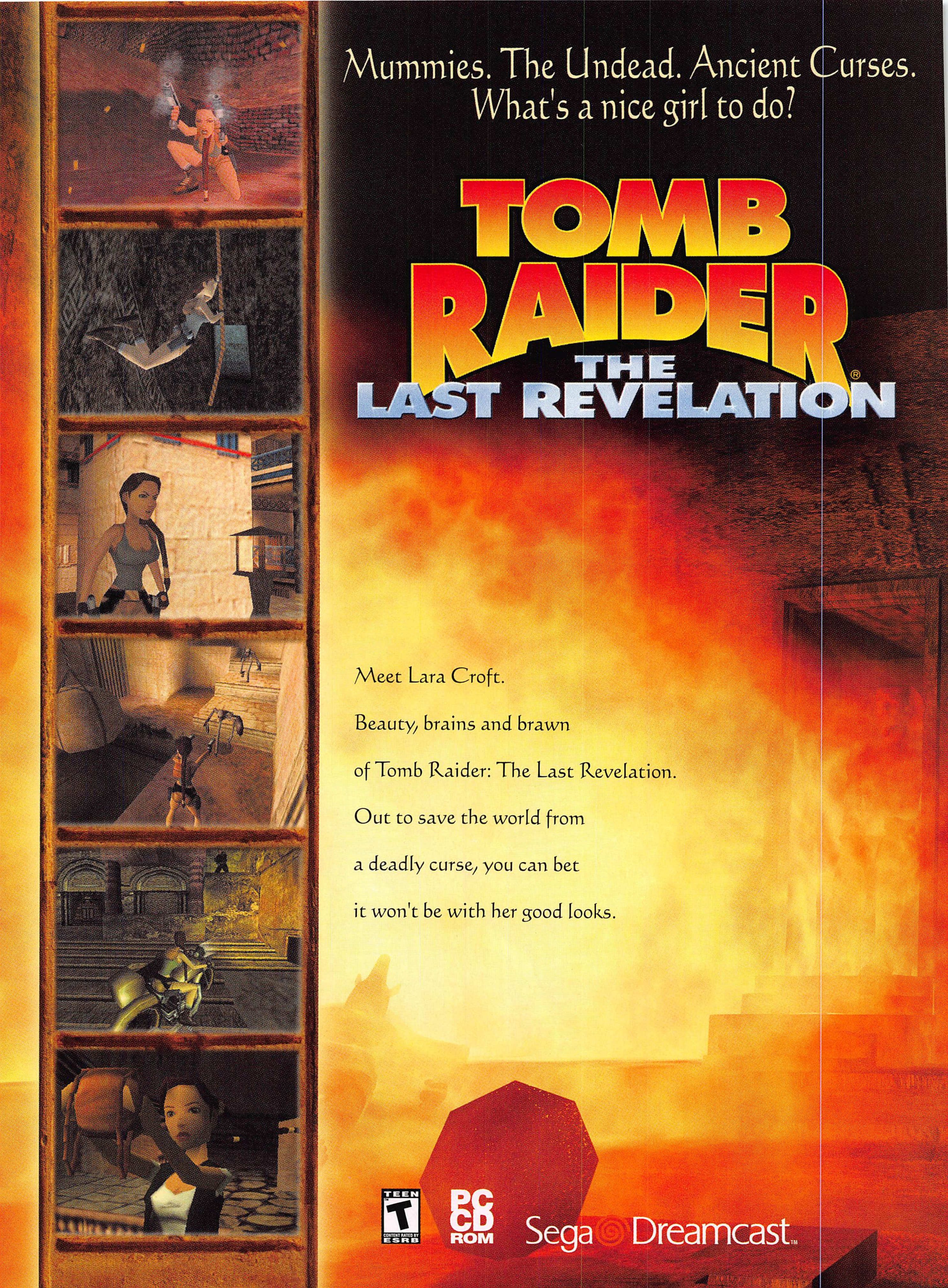
GF: Are there any games you've seen in Japan that you'd like to see over here, on these shores?
RC: Todd Smith, our Q/A guy, spent time in Japan teaching English; Todd says, "*Tail Concerto!* This is a complex adventure story that's complemented by a background world populated with human-like dogs and cats. I also like many of the games for both PlayStation and Sega that are based on the *Mobile Suit Gundam* background (I prefer the cockpit-view games over the *MechWarrior*-type games, because the action is more cinematic). I think we will see some of these eventually, because Cartoon Network will begin to show the series 'Gundam W' (for 'wing') this spring. A TV tie-in sure didn't hurt Pokémon, did it?"

GF: Any thoughts on how the PlayStation 2 will do against the established Dreamcast?
RC: It sure looks good on paper. We'll see what the market decides, and what the developers can do with it. The history of the video game business is a study in aberrant economics—it's been a series of surprises.

GF: Are there any other projects you're working on, and can you tell us something about them?
RC: We have some projects in the works, but we can't comment about them yet.

GF: Finally, do you have a website (or other form of communication) open to publishers who would like to contact you about localization?
RC: I can be reached via e-mail at info@canfield.com.





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GAUNTLET LEGENDS

LONG before the days of *Quake* and *Unreal Tournament*, players looking for a true multi-player experience had to do the unthinkable: venture outside. That's right—the safety net of home PC online gaming wasn't always an option, and true gamers faithfully made the trek to the local arcade to go for broke on the original *Gauntlet*. (If you don't remember *Gauntlet*, or, sadly, just haven't played it, you by definition fall into the GameFan category of 'weak sauce'—say 'hi' to Super Teeter and Big Bubba for me, if ya can.)

Finally, over ten years later, *Gauntlet*'s made its long-overdue return to arcades in the form of the ultra-successful *Gauntlet Legends*. Indeed, many a gamer can recall the heydays of his/her youth, when games were cheap and ECM was a shorter, gentler soul. Ah, memories from the corners of my mind...

Yes, the wondrous world of porting: sometimes good, often bad. Unfortunately, the latter's generally the case with most Dreamcast conversions, but now and again, games (especially arcade ports) do come out that break the swirling mold: *Sega Rally 2*, for example.

So what about N64-to-DC ports? Well, *Shadowman* and the import *Bangaio* were blazing conversions that literally crushed their Nintendo predecessors. And though it's extremely early, *GL* DC easily wipes the floor with its N64 counterpart (which, if you happened to have played the busted N64 rev, is not at all difficult to fathom). How, then, does it fare compared to the *GL* arcade piece? Let's just say that the development team definitely has its hands full—and then some! *GL* DC's animation and textures are sorely lacking in detail, and its frame rate's painful to observe.

Now, before *Gauntlet* purists bow their heads in mourning, realize that *GL* DC is not set for release until June. As of this writing, that's almost four long months away... Much can (and certainly will) change in the development cycle, and *GL* is a Midway product (*Hydro Thunder*, *Ready 2 Rumble*, etc.), so the end result should be fairly spectacular. In fact, the Dreamcast's hardware is far more powerful than that of the *GL* arcade machine—so expect a 100%-perfect conversion.

Have you ever heard the saying, "Time heals all wounds?" It's really amazing how products can turn completely around in just a few short months. Come June, *GL* will undoubtedly turn heads on the DC with its fast-paced, frenzied multi-player gameplay. Demons and Lobbers beware—the Archer, Valkyrie, Magician and Warrior are set to unload a bit of medieval whoop-ass on the DC later this year... and if you thought the N64 version was good, you're in need of some serious help. I hear Dr. Kevorkian's got a great remedy... **F**

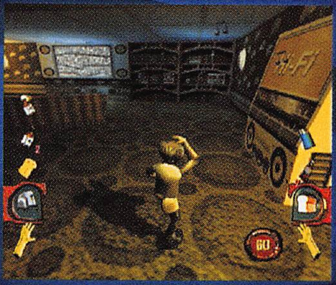








PREVIEW — FURY: WARRIOR	DEVELOPER - MIDWAY	1-4 PLAYERS
NEEDS FRAMES BADLY...	PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	AVAILABLE JUN '00








MDK 2

A while back, Shiny came up with a highly heralded PC shooter that was three parts 'zany,' two parts 'innovative' and one part 'too easy.' It was called *MDK*, and now, three years and a PS port later, the sequel's coming to another platform, with another developer. Yes, BioWare's handling the duties this time around, and the console of choice is the Dreamcast. If the name BioWare doesn't ring a bell, they're the ones who created the PC version of *Baldur's Gate*, a godsend for sweaty, pimply-faced Dungeons & Dragons gamers everywhere. These crazy Canadians can do more than roll dice, though—they can program for consoles as well...




Murder On The Senses

The first thing you'll notice is the game's blistering optical assault. Sweet lighting effects abound, including real-time light sourcing that tracks your character, and even casts shadows. The frame rate's deliciously smooth as well... not quite a stunning sixty frames, but definitely higher than the generic thirty. Textures and worlds rarely look this good. The game's atmosphere is decidedly futuristic, reminiscent of *Blade Runner*'s sprawling metropolis cityscape. But don't stop to gawk at the architecture for too long—there's trouble afoot.



Death From Above

MDK fans will be happy to see that Kurt remains mostly unchanged from the first game. His eggbeater parachute, sniper scope and bullet cam are all present and accounted for. Plus, there's a heavier emphasis on 3D platforming: The levels aren't as flat this time, they're built upward and outward. Rest assured, that parachute's going to get a lot of work, as will your sniper gun. Be prepared for a lot of sniping on the fly and dodging lasers while tracking far-away targets.

Kill-er Difficulty

One of the complaints about the first *MDK* was that it was cake—so easy, in fact, that you could finish it in one sitting without difficulty. Well, that should no longer be a problem in *MDK2*. In addition to dealing with a new control scheme (think *Turok* controls on a DC pad: the four buttons walk, the analog stick looks, the d-pad cycles through weapons, while the shoulder buttons jump and fire), you've got tougher challenges and puzzles to contend with. Maybe the difficulty will be toned down to something more acceptable in the final version, but our copy's pretty heinous...

Two More Heroes

Whereas *MDK* only granted control of the super-galactic assassin Kurt, *MDK2* lets you assume the role of every member of the trio. Max is a six-legged dog who pulls a double John Woo (i.e., four guns at the same time). His scenarios are very arcade-like, full of action-packed, gunslinging carnage. Doc Hawkins is the mad scientist, and his scenes play as such. He'll create deadly weapons from ordinary household objects, such as a leaf blower or a toaster, with just your bare hands. Of course, our preview rev is far from final—but we should be back soon with a full review. The game's due out around the time you read this... **E**

DEVELOPER - BIOWARE	1 PLAYER	EGGO: SILENT SCOPE...
PUBLISHER - INTERPLAY	AVAILABLE SPRING	BEFORE IT WAS SILENT SCOPE...

P PREVIEW

COMING SOON

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON

Dreamcast



Berserk

Developer
Yukes

Publisher
Eidos

1 Player
Available Summer

Head-splitting, blood-drenched action's coming to the U.S., thanks to Eidos... *Berserk*, released in Japan a couple of months ago, is headed straight for your DC. In case you haven't heard of it, it's based on a manga of the same name. Gattsu, the hero, carries a sword, oh, about the size of Cloud Strife's bigger-than-a-Mack-truck blade. Players are forced to slice and dice their way through hordes of evil monsters (much like *Golden Axe*). Thank the stars above that Gattsu has a Berserk meter, much like *Samurai Shodown*. When the meter's full, Gattsu's endowed with extra strength—until the meter runs out again. It'll be killing time once again this summer...





Dreamcast

Power Stone 2

Developer
Capcom

Publisher
Capcom

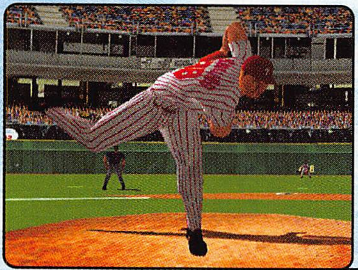
1-4 Players
Available Fall



Here's some news for anyone who played (and liked) *Powerstone*: a sequel's right around the corner. This time, much to the dismay of Mighty Midge (a.k.a. ECM), *Powerstone* **will be** a four-player game. We're salivating at the thought of going at it à la Rakugaki, with super-crazy battles—though we can't imagine what it's going to be like once a character collects every stone for the Power Fusion... In standard Capcom fashion, expect every character from the original *Powerstone*, plus some new ones. Man, it would sure be cool to see Akuma in there...







ESPN Baseball Tonight

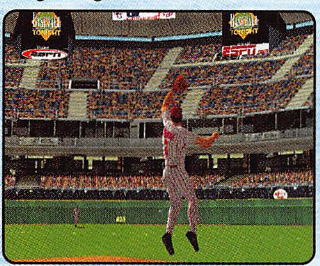
Developer
Konami

Publisher
Konami

1-2 Players
Available Fall

We didn't think baseball could look this good—but man, does it look hot! In conjunction with Disney/ESPN, Konami's first DC sports title may heat up the diamond scene. It also might remove the stigma that most recent Konami sports games, uh, ain't been so hot. If Konami can get the game out before Sega converts *World Series 99*, the publisher will stand to garner a huge following. We need to get our hands on a playable version of this one before passing final judgment, but if the visuals are any indication of the game's quality, Konami's got a grand slam on deck.





Tomb Raider IV

Developer
Core

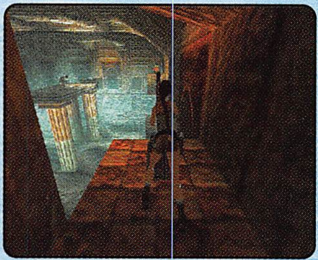
Publisher
Eidos

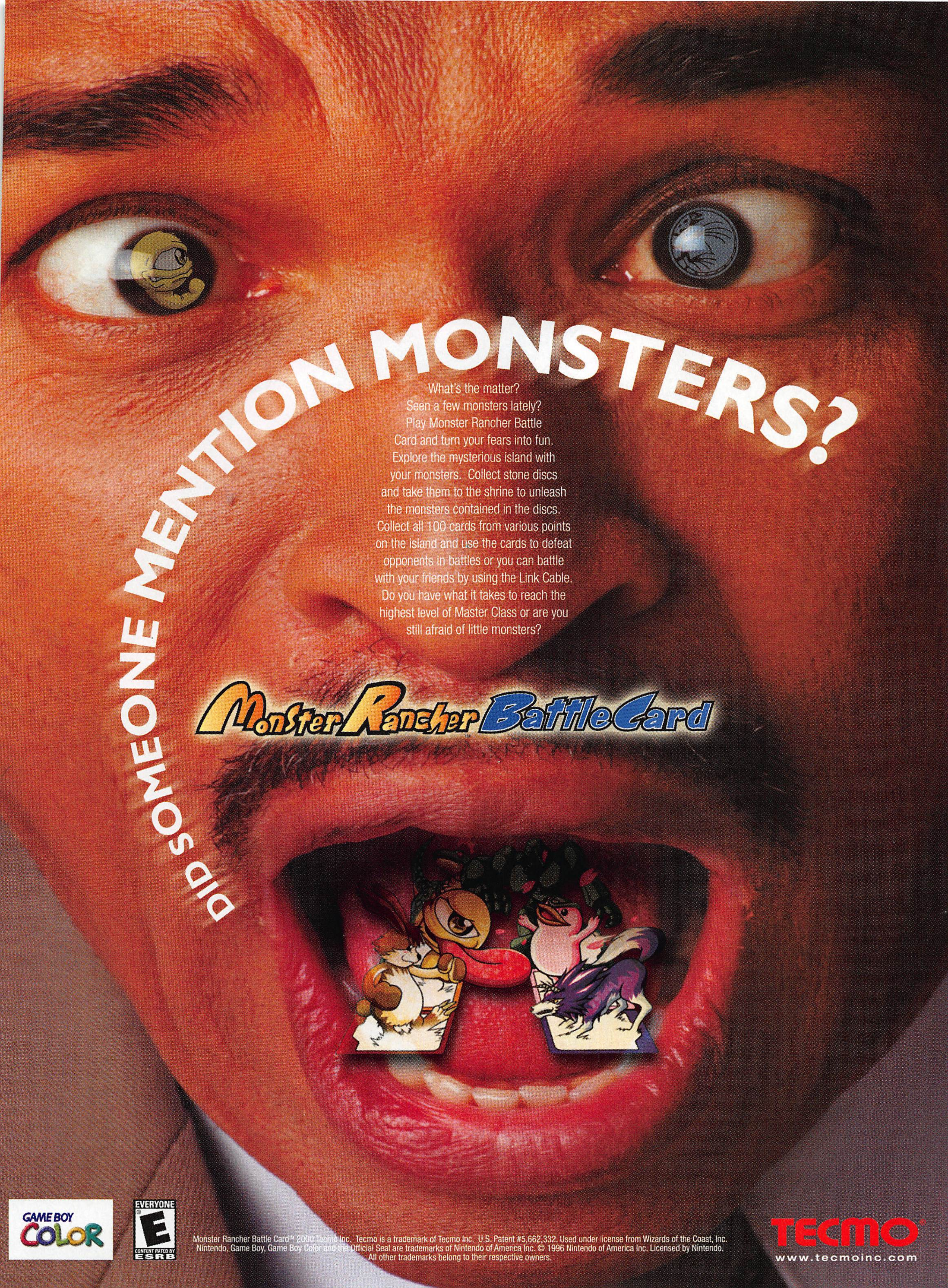
1 Player
Available Fall



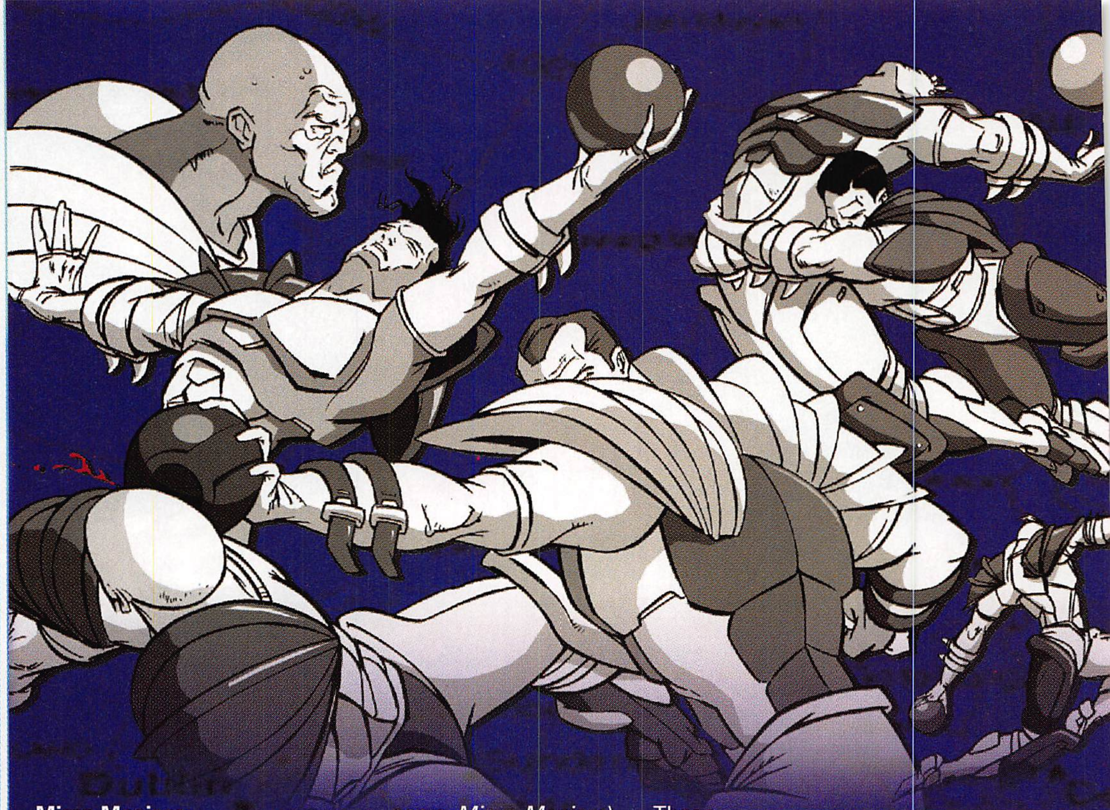
Well, looky who we have here... Ms. Croft finds her way onto the Dreamcast. For once, a console version of *Tomb Raider* may outdo its PC cousin. Like the DC version of *Soul Reaver, Tomb Raider IV* won't see any new features beyond the mandatory bump in graphical quality. Keep your fingers crossed that it'll have improved control compared to the PlayStation rev. Who knows—a console as powerful as the DC might just do Lara and company justice... Watch for a full preview in the coming months.







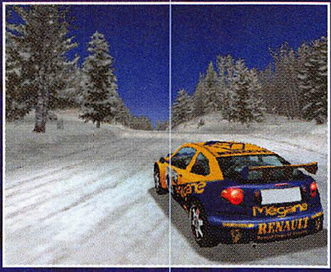
DID SOMEONE MENTION MONSTERS?
What's the matter?
Seen a few monsters lately?
Play Monster Rancher Battle Card and turn your fears into fun. Explore the mysterious island with your monsters. Collect stone discs and take them to the shrine to unleash the monsters contained in the discs. Collect all 100 cards from various points on the island and use the cards to defeat opponents in battles or you can battle with your friends by using the Link Cable. Do you have what it takes to reach the highest level of Master Class or are you still afraid of little monsters?
Monster Rancher Battle Card
GAME BOY COLOR
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TECMO
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After a few quiet months, European developers are finally starting to open up on their impending projects with several new high-profile games in the pipeline. Microsoft's oft-discussed entry into the console market, the X-Box, has also caused some commotion. Top European developers have already received specs and preliminary development information about the console. As for the PlayStation 2, no official European release date's been given, but several sources have stated that late September seems to be the most likely time for launch, even if European developers aren't ready for it.

Micro Maniacs

Many of Codemasters' titles have failed to live up to expectations (e.g., *No Fear Downhill Mountain Biking*), and numerous others have suffered from the dreaded slippage (*Prince Naseem Boxing* is a prime example), but the spring season's looking promising for the British company. The sequel to the 1.5 million-seller *Colin McRae* is on course for a late March release, and the fourth entry in the *Micro Machines* series will be out a few weeks earlier. Andrew Graham, the creator of the series, is at the helm again, and several changes to the gameplay have been made. The biggest change has been to the characters: The familiar miniature vehicles have been replaced with inch-high biped creatures (hence the name *Micro Maniacs*)... Those experiencing nightmares of *Running Wild* and working up a nervous sweat can relax—*MM4*'s early version proves to be an exhilarating racing experience for as many as eight players. The omission of the tiny jeeps, tanks and cars is actually an advantage in this game. The creatures prove to be easier to control around the track. Still, the same finesse that inhabited the *Micro Machines* games is in there... as are a few vehicles, like jet-skis. And as far as sound goes, it has to be said that Codemasters' titles consistently have the best game soundtracks, at least in Europe. *Micro Maniacs 4* is going to feature an excellent mixture of drum 'n bass and jungle tracks...









Alone In The Dark IV

Original game ideas are hard to come by these days. If you were one of the many that thought Capcom's *Resident Evil* was something new, well, it wasn't. Survival horror began way back in the good ol' days of the Amiga, by Infogrames, with a game called *Alone In The Dark*. *AitD* discarded the usual 2D graphics of the time and successfully implemented real-time polygon characters in pre-rendered backgrounds... well, not really pre-rendered, but some fine work produced with DeLuxe Paint. T-Viruses and the Umbrella Corporation weren't featured in *AitD*, either, but the scares were very similar to what Shinji Mikami's done with *Resident Evil*.

I always worry when I see sequels that don't employ the talents of the people who created the original game (Frederick Raynal of No Cliché), but for all intents and purposes, it seems that new French developer DarkWorks is on the right track with *Alone in the Dark IV*. Infogrames is generously fund-



ing the team that started working on the game after finishing a massive 800-page document detailing the enemies, locations and puzzles of *AitD IV*. Highly detailed, pre-rendered backgrounds with the kind of expressionist style only the talented French artists can muster will be featured. All characters will be constructed of polygons. DarkWorks promises the PlayStation version will be one of the most beautiful games on the console ever, and judging by these early PlayStation shots, they're right.

As for the plot, DarkWorks and Infogrames won't release too many details, but we know that our original hero, detective Edward Carnby, will be back for revenge. Carnby's best friend, Fiske, is found dead on an island. During his investigation, Carnby's informed that Fiske was searching for three ancient tablets that could unleash untold powers when he was killed. The run-down island quickly becomes the focus of the game, where most of the action will happen.

DarkWorks is convinced that it'll have the Dreamcast, PlayStation and PC versions finished by the end of the year, with extra care given to the Dreamcast version's characters (more polygons!)... It'll be interesting to see if *AitD IV* can make a difference in the survival-horror genre that Capcom's all but milked dry...

V-Rally 2 Hits the Dreamcast

After achieving global success with the original PlayStation *V-Rally,* Infogrames came out with the race-tastic sequel *V-Rally 2*. *V-Rally 2* didn't quite live up to its lofty sales expectations, though, and is part of the reason *V-Rally*'s headed to the Dreamcast in Europe this May. Personally, I prefer *V-Rally* to *Colin McRae* and Codemasters' efforts—it's all in the handling.

I recently had the chance to try out a very early alpha version of *V-Rally 2 Millennium Edition*, and the game blew me away. Now, the collision detection wasn't fully in place, nor was the code optimized, but the visuals already had that super-sharp DC look, and the textures were intricate and very realistic; they've obviously gone through a serious facelift from the PlayStation version. The draw distance is awesome, and visually, *V-Rally 2* leaves *Sega Rally 2* choking in its dust. Infogrames also has quite a jump on Codemasters' upcoming Dreamcast monster—a new *Colin McRae Rally* won't debut until the fourth quarter of 2000...

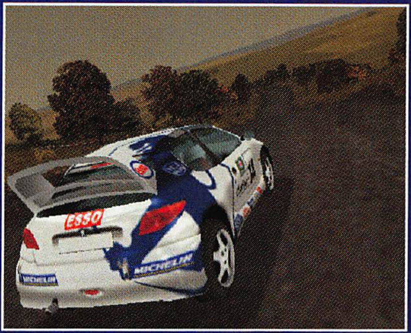
Matt Darey Does N-Gen

That pretty much sums it up—but if that witty headline doesn't reveal its true meaning to you, then here's the 411... Curly Monsters and Infogrames have signed British DJ Matt Darey to create the soundtrack for the upcoming PlayStation title *N-Gen*. Darey's best known for his many trance remixes. His style's perfect for *N-Gen*, which is about fast-paced flying at low altitudes. A May European release date's been announced for *N-Gen*...

Speedball 2100 Screen Shots

A few months back, Europa featured Bitmap Brothers, who slipped a few details on its upcoming *Speedball 2100*. We now have a smattering of screen shots to accompany that info. Bitmap Bros. is obviously taking the safe route with the third game in the series, and is basically making a new *Speedball 2* with all-new 3D graphics. The stats screen is again included (in which players can beef themselves up by distributing a limited amount of points), but there's no word yet on a simultaneous four-player mode—or the soundtrack, for that matter.

GameFan's disappointed to find out that the development team's decided against implementing serious new gameplay changes, but we take solace in the fact that the classic gameplay can still hold its own in this day and age...





Silver Dreamcast

It's worrisome to see that excellent games like *Outcast* and *Silver* failed to find their PC audiences last year, despite being prime examples of good game design. *Outcast*'s console versions have been completely scrapped (the sequel's coming to the PS2, and uses polygons instead of voxels), but Infogrames' Square-ish RPG *Silver* is heading to the Dreamcast this summer with some improvements to the control department.

The original *Silver* stood out with its *Final Fantasy*-like style, pre-rendered backgrounds, original, real-time characters (there were over fifty different individuals to meet during your quest) and simple control method in real-time combat sequences. The story isn't exactly original. "Silver" is the name of the evil sorcerer that rules the land of Jarrah. Players take on the role of a knight called David who must rescue his wife from Silver's stronghold and destroy the evil sorcerer. Well, it gets no points for its clichéd revenge scenario—but the strong narrative element should keep players interested in the Dreamcast version as they collect eight magical orbs to give David the powers of fire, ice, life, lightning, earth, acid, time and light... just the elements he'll need to destroy Silver...

Milia 2000

Just before the latest magazine deadline, the Milia 2000 conference was held in Cannes, France. Sega boasted a strong presence there (after practically no-showing last year). Shoichiro Irimajiri gave an insightful speech on the Dreamcast's future, backed up by demos of *Ecco The Dolphin* and a near-finished *Metropolis Street Racer* which both looked every bit as good as we'd hoped they would. Playability still remained in the dark, however.

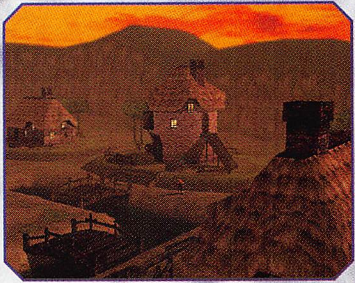
Black and White and *Half-Life* were also announced for the Dreamcast (GameFan attended the same *Black and White* presentation at ECTS '99 that Sega of Japan's brass did, so something was definitely up), which signalled a strong year-end lineup for Sega. GameFan wonders if Lionhead's tackling the Dreamcast conversion duties... According to rumor, the team will show an X-Box version of Peter Molyneux's latest game at the GDC while trying to finish the PC version for April. Core's Dreamcast incarnation of *Tomb Raider IV* also put in an appearance, as did Brazilian soccer god Ronaldo, who was promoting his upcoming *Ronaldo V-Football* game—but more on that next month.

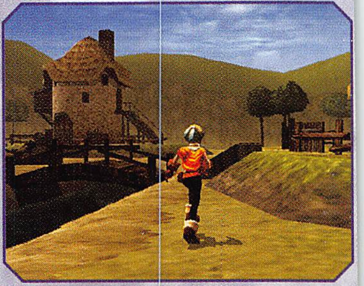
—Riot





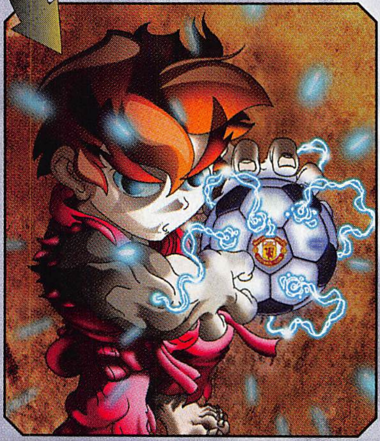
Japan Now!

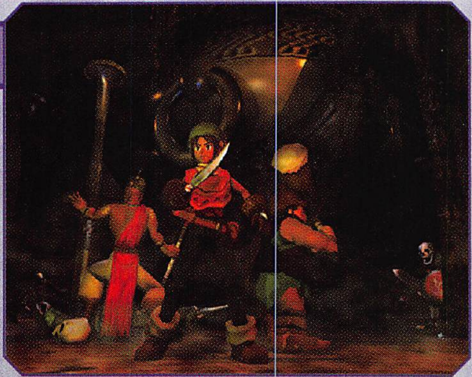





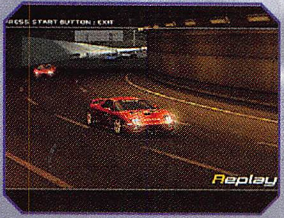
Japan Now is brought to you by Kodomo

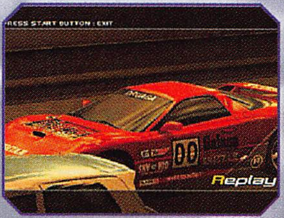
Dark Cloud (PlayStation 2)



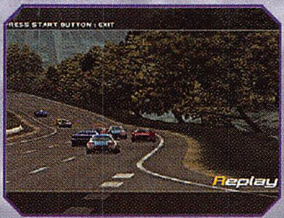



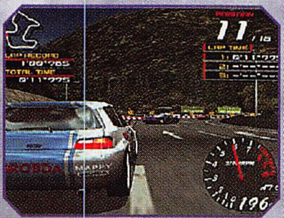
It's no secret that the PlayStation has now become the king of good RPGs, but will the trend continue on PS2? Well, if Sony has their way it will. *Dark Cloud*, still shrouded in a mist of secrecy, will be Sony's first RPG for the new console and it certainly looks impressive (even ECM capitulated on that one). Expect more information in the coming months, building up to its fall release. **Kodomo**







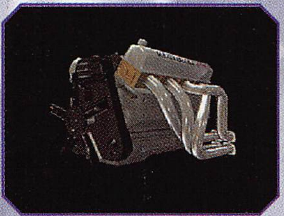


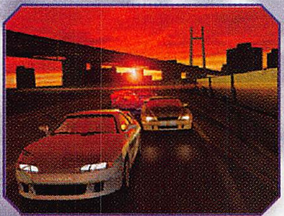
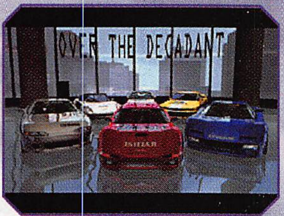


Ridge Racer V (PlayStation 2)

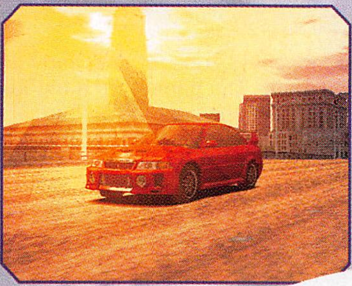
If you want Arcade racing madness on a console, you need look no further than NAMCO's *Ridge Racer V*. Just as *Ridge Racer* did with the release of the PS back in 1994, look for this one to rate as a must buy. The best news is that you'll get a racer very similar to *R4*, with the same variety of cars (Grip and Drift) and, for the first time, a soundtrack compiled by some of electronic music's finest artists. Better than that, you can expect no fewer than 7 courses, with selectable time of day, all running at a constant 60 FPS. Still, the news that Reiko Nagase has been replaced as race girl is tough to take, but I have a feeling that Dango, and the multitude of others, can find the will to survive. **Kodomo**

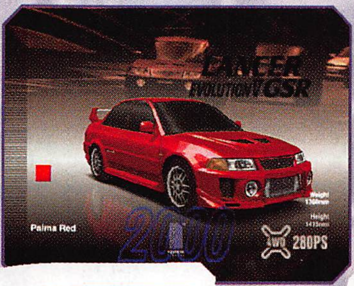




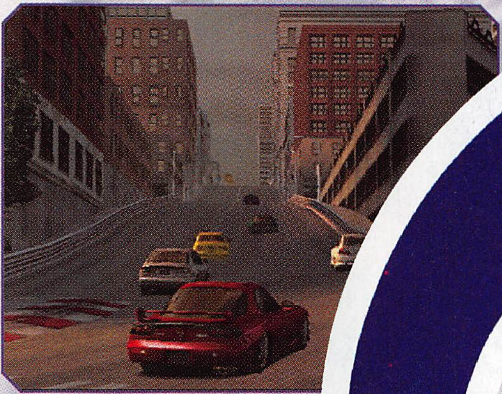



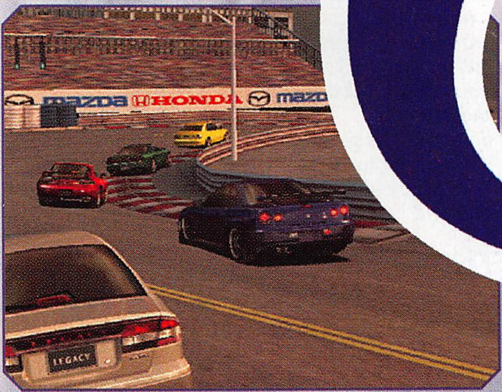


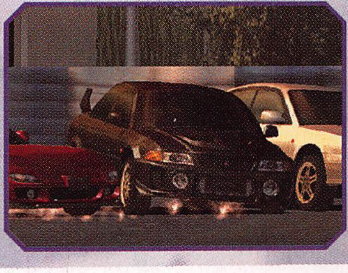












GRAN TURISMO™ 2000

THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR

Gran Turismo 2000 was one of the first titles announced for PlayStation 2, even making an appearance in playable form at the 1999 E3. Since then, the game's release has mysteriously slipped from the Japanese launch day, and now resides in a realm that Fury is quite familiar with (read: "I have no idea."). Judging from the following shots, which show a wider variety of cars and tracks, the day when you'll have all the GT-sim goodness that a gear-head can handle isn't too far off. As you'd expect, the graphics have undergone a **massive** upgrade, while the gameplay will continue in the same vein as the first 2 in the series. And to think, I'll finally have an R34 Nissan Skyline, Subaru Impreza WRX and Mitsubishi Evolution VI under my control... **Kodomo**











Popolo*who?*

Back when the PlayStation first appeared, one of the early RPGs to grace the system was *Popolocrois* (pronounced 'Poh-pah-lo-kroy'). The game was a big hit in Japan (so big, in fact, that it spawned its own anime series), but never saw the light of day here. For the most part, SCEA was very good about bringing worthy games to the U.S. (particularly RPGs, which had a serious case history of repeated neglect). Yet, alas, not even Sony was immune from making mistakes, and it let *Popolocrois* fall through the cracks. Now, the true sequel's been released in Japan (*Poporogue*, released over a year ago, was a sub-par spin-off of the original), and we're here with the full review...









Hey look, it's our old pal, 2D!

I won't belabor the point—as you already know, we have an unrequited love for sprites and line scrolling. So I'll spare you the rant this time (a round of relaxed sighs, eh?)... Just know that *Popolocrois 2* is entirely 2D, complete with sprite characters and flat backgrounds, à la *Saga Frontier 2*. *Grandia/Xenogears* lovers might be upset that the environments aren't 3D—you can't rotate them to look around—but once over that, you'll get your chance to marvel at the scenery. You see, *Popolocrois 2*'s a lot like *Saga Frontier 2*, in that the game looks like a storybook. Cartoony graphics, a youthful art style full of kiddy-like characters and colorful backgrounds all add up to a wondrous RPG world just waiting to be gawked over.

Magical kingdom handdrawn goodness lives... again!





Pietro's back, and this time, he's takin' no prisoners!

O.K., so Pietro's still a harmless little prince... at least he's got heart. He's also the star of this second adventure—and he'll be joined by most of the characters that made the original *Popolocrois* so popular, too, including the lovely forest fairy Narcia, the venerable King Paulo, and the chivalrous White Knight. As the game begins, we watch as Pietro's father, the king, sends him out into the world in search of adventure and his own manhood... yadda, yadda, yadda.







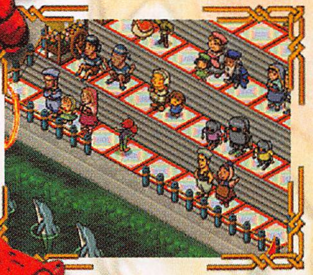






Battle Arena Popolocrois

Like *Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Popolocrois 2* features turn-based battles allowing you to position and order your characters strategically to attack with special abilities or items. Battles are a frequent affair... In fact, they're a little too frequent. Walk ten steps, and you're almost guaranteed a random encounter; this is my sole gripe with the game. Fortunately, there are some positive aspects to fighting, as well. First of all, battles don't take very long: dispatching random forest peons can take less than twenty seconds if you're leveled up. Second, there's an auto-battle feature built into the game that I highly recommend. It seems a little unnatural to turn your characters loose to fight on their own, but it saves a lot of time, because the CPU moves your party members with astonishing speed—it doesn't have to 'think' or fiddle with menu commands. The AI isn't bad, either; it actually relieves much of the boredom spawned from repetitive random encounters.



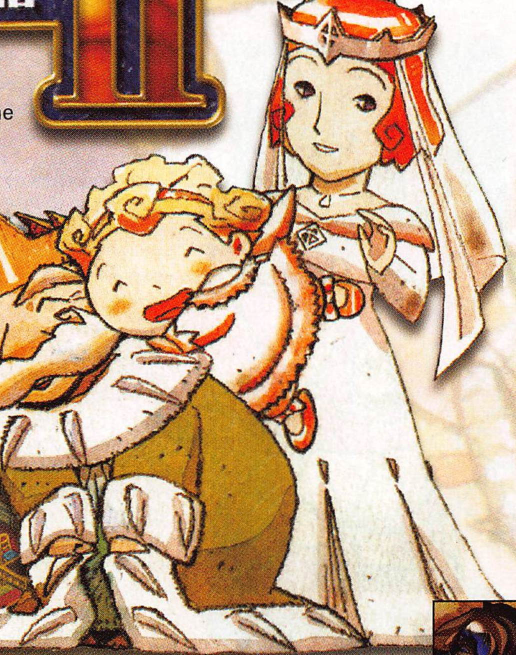


Popolocrois II
ポポロクロイス物語 II

A Popolocrois in your future?

While it was a shame that the original *Popolocrois* never saw the light of day here, the success of the sequel might draw the attention of a U.S. publisher (over 125,000 copies sold in two weeks). If not Sony or Working Designs, maybe Atlus or THQ could pick this one up. Heck, if any of these companies are listening, you can bring over the first *Popolocrois* while you're at it. Ultimately, though, even if these cries fall on deaf ears, there's still a chance we'll eventually see *Popolocrois*—*Popolocrois 3*'s already been announced for the PlayStation 2.

When Eggo asked for this game in Japan, the clerk came back holding an air freshener.









Viewpoint Score •87	Developer - Sugar & Rockets	1 Player	Eggo: Popocropolis, err,	R Review
	Publisher - Publisher	Available Now Japan	pocrolopooey... Ummm...	

スーパーマグネチック ニュウニュウ

SUPERMAGNETICNIUNIU



From the Desk of Fury...

One of my all-time favorite video game genres is the platformer. To this day, *Sonic Adventure* still maintains top rank in my DC collection, and until Treasure releases an update to *Dynamite Headdy* (word on the fabled DC Treasure Collection is sadly a no-go), I'll continue to bitch and moan on the genre's current state. If the last platformer you happened to play was *Bonk's Adventure*, let me briefly fill you in on this sad tale... The bulk of today's gamers want survival horror titles, RPGs, racers and fighters—not cutesy platformers. Sure, the genre might see some real success on the Fun Machine from time to time, but do you really think Sony and Sega execs are scrambling to fill the void? What's a platforming junkie like me supposed to do? *Sonic Adventure 2* and *Banjo-Tooie* are still a ways off, and... what's this, an import platformer? *Super Magnetic* who? Genki what!?! O.K., who slipped a wacky tablet in my coffee?

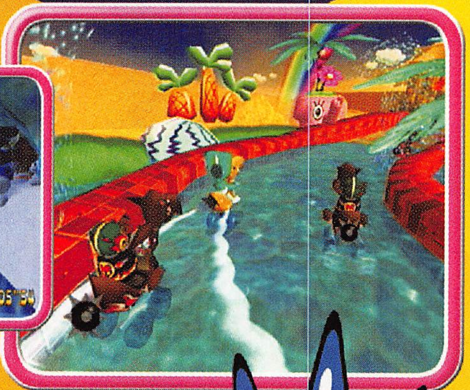
Genki: A Developer Reborn?

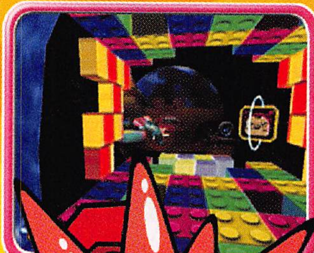
Genki...aren't these the same guys responsible for *Kileak: The Blood*? What the heck happened?! First Genki releases a kick-ass port of *VF3tb*, then the brilliant *Tokyo Extreme Racer*, then it tops the list off with a raging port of Sega's *Virtua Striker Ver. 2000.1*—a developer reborn, indeed. And now, as the majority of popular genres become inundated, the developer of the hour has its sights set on the murky waters of platforming... welcome to the bizarre and oddly unique world of *Super Magnetic NiuNiu*.







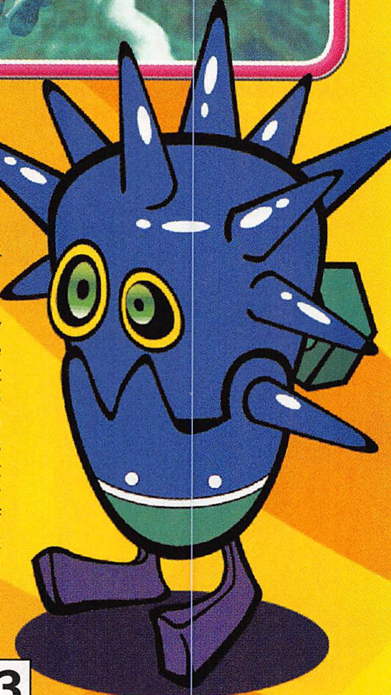




50% Crash Bandicoot,
50% Pen Pen Trilcelon, 100% Strange!

Super Magnetic NiuNiu isn't exactly your typical 3D platformer, and it's certainly not a title that calls out to American gamers. It's got some interesting play mechanics (see "Super Magnetic Charm," later in this article), and the graphics (much like those of *Pen Pen*) seem to redefine the term "cute," but don't let *NiuNiu*'s initial appearance fool you. This game's tough—maybe not '*Chakan*' hard, but difficult enough to discourage its target audience. Now, in Japan (where gamers appear a bit more forgiving toward fruity titles—*Space Channel Five,* for example), *NiuNiu* might generate a broader fan base, but a few things will definitely need tweaking before its U.S. release. Namely, the whole "get hit once and die" gameplay's gotta go. Again, that's fine for titles that speak to an older crowd, but take the game's 'kiddie graphics' into account, and things just don't feel right. I mean, jeez, if I had such a frustrating time playing *NiuNiu* (the margin for error in this game's almost zero) how are kids going to react? I'll tell you how: with about a million sales of *Code Veronica!* Even if you can get past the heavily citrus-induced visuals, you've got a pretty difficult game in need of some serious ninja coordination. Just ask yourself: Do you really think some challenging gameplay is going to help *NiuNiu* sell? I have a bad feeling we'll wind up seeing Genki's impending foray into the platforming genre permanently shelved next to *Pen Pen Trilcelon*...





R REVIEW FURY: Didn't your mom tell you not to play with magnets?	Developer - Genki	1 Player	Viewpoint Score: 73
	Publisher - Genki	Available Now Japan	






Super Magnetic Charm

As its name suggests, *Super Magnetic NiuNiu*'s centered on magnetic principles. Three buttons are at your disposal—one for jumping, and two (A and B) that release either a blue or a red magnetic field. Using the red field on like colors will repel your character, whereas opposite colors attract—listen up, you never know when this might come in handy with your car battery! Enemies of a similar color can also be sucked into your field and transformed into a green box; these boxes act as projectiles, knocking down barriers and killing any baddies that don't fall into either the blue or red categories. *NiuNiu*'s magnetic field can also be used to latch onto numerous swings high above the ground. Confused? It definitely takes a bit of hands-on play before things make sense, but soon after, you'll be propelling and repelling your silly-looking character with the greatest of magnetic ease.



Like *Crash Bandicoot*, *NiuNiu* tends to jump from 2.5D play to full, head-on 3D. For the most part, the play mechanics have little to do with *Crash*, though particular stages do show striking similarities. One stage in particular puts *NiuNiu* aboard a camel, speeding toward the screen exactly like Crash on Pura the tiger. Also, due to the game's finicky behind-the-back camera (gauging depth is often difficult) and frustration factor (believe me, the collision detection's on full blast!), level memorization becomes key. Ultimately, the unforgiving gameplay just hinders the game's overall flow—which is fine for the ECMs of the world, but for you and I...

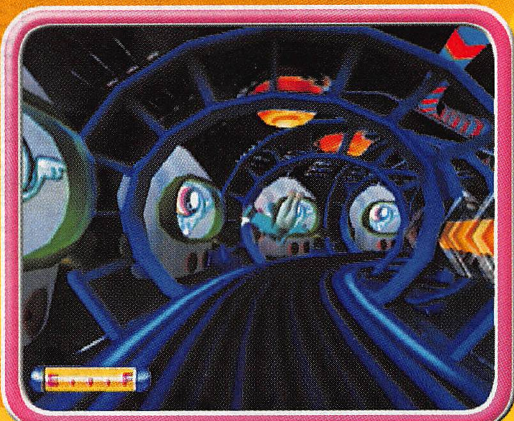





Crave: Following In THQ's Footsteps?

Crave appears to be taking the THQ route—bringing the obscure to American soil. Does anyone out there remember *Floating Runner*? THQ gained some industry respect by localizing Xing's little gem, and now, Crave's looking to make lightning strike twice. But here's a little advice for the good people at Crave: Bring *Virtual On Oratorio Tangram* to the U.S.! It's a CRIME if this title doesn't see the light of day here. Oh well, at least Crave's intent on bringing import titles Stateside—alas, the platforming hunt continues...

Fury must have a magnetic effect on the Quote of the Day...



GameFan Sports

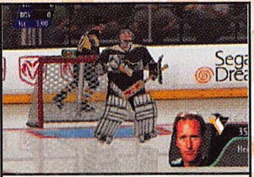
Let's hope that when aliens come down to our puny planet and try to learn what kind of people we are from our culture, they don't use the video game market as source material. Judging by the game themes and industry staples, you'd think our whole populous was obsessed with car racing and gravity-defying breasts.

Ok, bad analogy.

How about I just say this: there are way too many racing games on the market and a disturbingly high number of F1 titles. Please stop the insanity.

On another note, let's talk about how this month's crop of hockey games was like a sucker punch to my kidneys. Two games that gave me so much hope and filled me with so much excitement turned out to totally suck. Thanks, guys, for actually making me earn my money this month.

—El Niño



NHL 2K
Dreamcast
Sega

Poor control, weak AI and the most ill-concieved line-change interface ever make *NHL 2K* the biggest disappointment of the year. Idle fans will derive pleasure from playing, but anyone expecting a 128-bit *NHL 2000* will be gravely disappointed.

G	C	P	M	O	
7	6	6	7	6	72

C'mon Sega—you give us *NFL 2K* and expect us to make due with this tripe? I'm totally disappointed and offended at this travesty. The AI is pulled straight off of old Genesis hockey games and visually, it's just as impressive as it's pigskin brother... Wanted: real hockey game.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	5	5	7	6	71



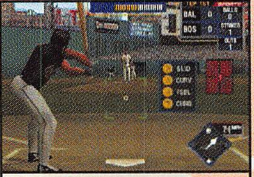
NHL Rock the Rink
PlayStation
EA

"You go to box... you feel shame..." No, this isn't the goalie for the Chiefs talking, it is (or should be) the lead producer of this game talking. This game sucks, plain and simple. Some of you simpletons will probably like this title. The rest of you will retch.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	6	4	5	4	57

There is something entirely wrong with the industry when games like this come out. Scrubby gameplay, loose control, and boring gameplay, buying this game will mark you as an idiot. So, follow this Dango's word... don't get.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	5	3	7	2	63



All Star Baseball
Nintendo 64
Acclaim

The best baseball game on console has gotten, well, a *bit* better. A phenomenal game, yes, but not worth buying if you own last year's version. There is just too little changed to make it worth the money. If only I could see these guys work this magic on DC or PS2...

G	C	P	M	O	
9	9	9	8	7	91

Nintendo's *Griffey* certainly could take pointers from Acclaim's sterling franchise. Not only is it a pitch perfect mix of sim and arcade, but it features cornfield matches akin to "Field of Dreams." No polygonal Kevin Costner, though. He's 2D to the bone. Snoogans.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	9	9	7	8	91



Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000
Nintendo 64
Acclaim

This game is so totally average I am at a loss for words. All I can do is shrug after playing and wonder how the hell the first version sold so many damn copies. If you like supercross, then I am sure you will get a kick outta this. If you are ambivilant, don't bother.

G	C	P	M	O	
7	7	7	7	7	75

I'm with Niño on this one. I've been wanting a decent supercross game ever since *Excitebike*, and they've all been disappointing. And yet, this game's prequel sold bunches... I'm at a loss for words. Good thing this box is so small, eh?

G	C	P	M	O	
7	6	6	5	6	67

NHL Rock The Rink

PlayStation | R Review | Developer: EA Sports | Publisher: EA Sports | Available: Spring | # of Players: 1-2

What on Earth happened here? I'm sitting at my desk, *Rock the Rink's* playing on my PlayStation, and I am absolutely dumbfounded. For years, I've dreamed of—begged for—an action hockey game that drew inspiration from *Slap Shot* instead of *Hockey Night In Canada* (actually, a Don Cherry game would be pretty cool), but not a game that panders to mindless button-mashers like *Open Ice* did.

All of a sudden, here it is: *Rock the Rink*, a game EA promised would bring blood-pumping, unsanctioned 'goon hockey' to the PlayStation. It even licensed the Hansons! *Slap Shot* hockey, here we come...

Now, here I sit, and again—dumbfounded. Instead of a six-on-six hockey title with tons of gooning, super-hard slap shots and blind refs, I get my worst MTV-styled, lowest-common-denominator nightmare possible; think of *Open Ice* in 3-D with even zanier special moves, bad gameplay and the absolute worst commentary, and you've got *Rock the Rink*. To top it all off, EA's added the NHL license... Why? Of what use is that? Has EA become so license-obsessed that it feels the need to slap one on every game it produces?

For those of you who'll still try this game just to spite me, I'll tell you that it's not time-based; the first player to score five goals is the winner. EA's included power-ups everywhere, teams are broken down to 'fat' guys and 'skinny' guys (like the old NES game) and the same old complementary features and modes.

This game's completely devoid of fun, and will disappoint anyone that thinks they're getting a new *Mutant League* game. I refuse to believe that the people behind the brilliant *NHL* series have anything to do with this piece of tripe; if they do, they should be ashamed. **EN**

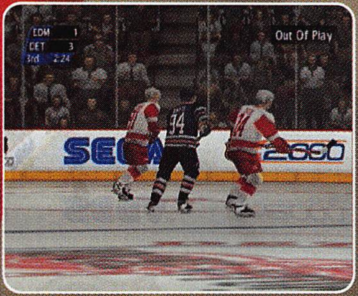


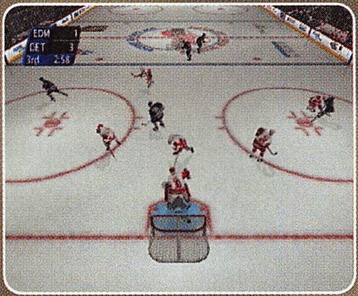






NHL 2K





Dreamcast

Developer: Black Box **Available: now**
Publisher: Sega **# of Players: 1-4**

R Review

Remember that phenomenal hockey title, *NHL Powerplay '96? Powerplay*, developed by the company Radical in the early days of 32-bit gaming, was one of the most impressive sports titles ever released, and gifted the Saturn with one of the few titles that actually looked and played better than the PlayStation version. Why do I bring this up? Well, the developers of *NHL2K* are former members of the team responsible for *Powerplay*. Black Box just seemed like the perfect group of guys to bring a hockey sim to the Dreamcast.

'Seemed,' yes; 'actually were'... no. *NHL2K* is as disappointing a title as I've played in years. This is no backlash toward a title that couldn't meet my expectations, either; I'm a forgiving man, and somewhat of a pushover, so that's just not the case. The fact is that *NHL2K* simply underachieves in most areas essential to a sports title, and that I can't overlook.

Now, I'll not sit here and gut this game, because there'll be many casual gamers who fail to see many of the flaws in this title that irk me. In fact, for Joe Blow, this might be quite an entertaining Dreamcast title... But for hockey sim fans, it'll be a slap in the face.

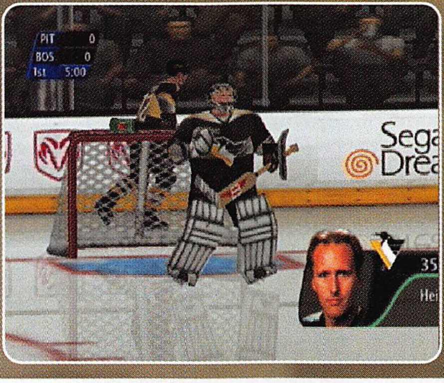
Let's start with what's right about this title. As far as eye candy's concerned, *NHL2K* is more than satisfactory. No, it doesn't look as good as *NFL2K* or *NBA2K*, but it sure looks better than any other hockey game that's ever been released. In close-up shots, you'll simply be amazed at how cool the players look. Unfortunately, the motion capture seems a bit stiff, and its gimpy player movements can sometimes trample on its beautiful looks (blame some of this on the frame-rate).

The game control hovers right around 'adequate;' the player movement's responsive, and the game speed's good, but I have other issues with the control... There's often a slight delay when passing (doh!), and shooting—well, just don't expect a player to actually take a backhanded shot, ever. Another major problem with gameplay can be found in the line changes; this is the worst implementation I've ever seen. When you click on your lines, you're forced to use the d-pad to make the switch, which means, essentially, you're left with no control of your players at all during the change. This is a definite problem. Hockey's a fast-paced title, and these lost seconds are quite valuable.

Then there's the commentary. Yeah, it's better than most of what we've seen on the 32-bit systems, but it's nowhere near the caliber of *NFL2K*... or even *NHL 2000*, on the PlayStation. Your color guy should have at least a little color...

O.k., now we get to *NHL2K*'s most heinous crime: AI. I'm sorry, but if you can't see the problems with this game's AI, then you have no idea what hockey's all about. When you can't even get the goalie to come out and fire the puck out of the zone on a power play, you have issues of your own. Defense won't cover the blue line properly, and some of the offensive setups seem confused. I once even caught my goalie chilling by the blue line for no apparent reason (no, I was not on manual goalie)... Needless to say, I got scored on.

NHL2K may be a fun experience if you're only interested in arcade hockey action. If you love your hockey sims, though, this game may be painful. Take my advice: Stick with EA's games on PlayStation... **EN**



All-Star Baseball 2000

Review

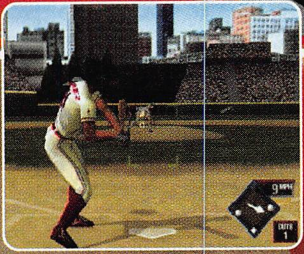
Developer: Iguana
Publisher: Acclaim
Available: Now
of Players: 1-4

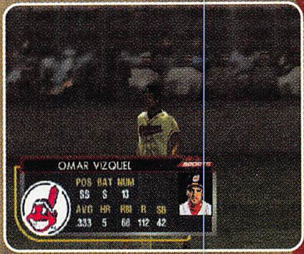
I am constantly shocked when I fire this game up. You look at the graphics of other N64 games and, yeah, they're impressive... but *All Star Baseball*'s in a whole other world. The visuals are so crisp and clear, with such incredible motion capturing, that *All Star Baseball* is still the best-looking title on the N64.

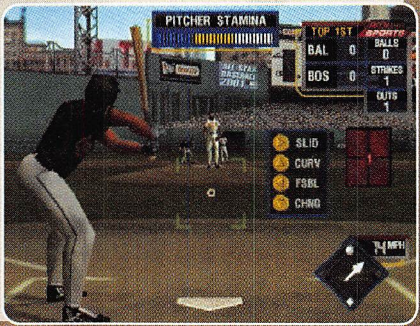
If you bought last year's version of the game, I can't help you justify picking up *ASB 2001*. The graphics are only slightly improved, and much of the gameplay's been left unchanged. Like many of the old EA ports, *ASB 2001*'s a mere $70 roster update. There are a couple of new stadiums and the new Cooperstown Legends, but come on—that's not much. Even the tweaked arcade mode and batting practice modes do little to set *ASB 2001* apart from *ASB 2000*.

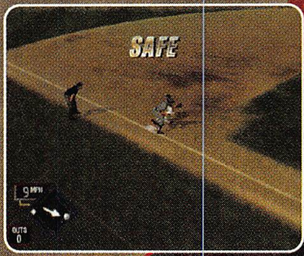
Ah, but if you have yet to try out this game, then I strongly suggest you do so, baseball fan or not. *ASB 2001*'s the best sports title on the N64—and maybe one of the best ever on a console. It's the perfect blend of simulation and arcade action, and has something for everyone. Games are quick, the learning curve's not too steep and the statistical tracking's deep enough to satiate stat whores like myself. Add near-perfect gameplay to that, and you have sports game perfection.

All Star Baseball 2001 embodies everything I love about baseball video games. Not since *World Series Baseball '94* on the Genesis have I played such a rock-solid baseball title. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to rewrite a little history... there's no way the Yanks are beating the Sox in five on *my* machine. **EN**









Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000

Review

Developer: Iguana
Publisher: Acclaim
Available: Now
of Players: 1-4

In another sign of the coming apocalypse, *Jeremy McGrath Supercross* sold some fifty billion copies last year (give or take a few). I wrestled with this most troubling turn of events even as I built my subterranean compound near Newfound Lake. "Am I that out of touch with John Q. Meatball?" I thought. "Have I become the thing I hate the most—a gaming elitist? Are these turrets not high enough? Or am I correct in thinking that this is just plain whacked?"

Well, whatever the reason, it doesn't change the fact that Acclaim couldn't be happier and I couldn't be any more confused. It also cannot derail the sequel train that inevitably pulls into town whenever a game makes such a splash. So, *Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000* is here—let the motocross frenzy begin!

Hey fans, guess what? This version's much better than the first! I realize that that's not saying much—but if you were all pleased with the last version, you'll be beside yourself this time out. The graphics are only par for the course, but the physics are good, as is the control (if a little too tight). The sound still sucks, but I never expect too much from the N64 in that department...

The coolest features in the game are the track and championship editors. Now you can make your own tracks with an easy-to-use tool system, as well as set up your own championship seasons. This, in effect, gives what is essentially a very shallow title enough depth to justify the cash you fork out.

I still fail to see how this wholly unremarkable title will pass muster, but considering that it *is* superior to its predecessor, I can only assume that it, too, will sell a billion copies. Now, if you'll excuse me... I have to stock my basement with Spam. **EN**





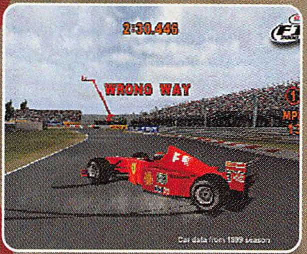




F1 2000

Preview | Dev.: Visual Sciences | Avail.: Spring | Publisher: EA Sports | # of Players: 1-2









Another F1 title's on its way because, you know, there just aren't enough to meet consumer demand... This one comes from the house that Madden built, and will deliver driving—lots and lots of driving. Hey, I've been doing this for a long time—I'm allowed to be smug.

In what is sure to be the beginning of another major EA franchise, *F1 2000* will attempt to capture the spirit of the world's most popular racing series on the PlayStation. EA has traditionally blazed the trail that others have followed, but here, they're jumping into the genre years behind the others, and while this will surely have no effect on game quality, the question must be posed: Will *F1* offer us anything we can't already get in another title?

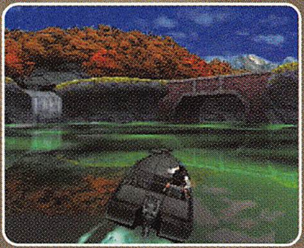
F1 2000 will be the first Formula title modeled after the 2000 season. This will not only be reflected in the drivers and their teams, but also in the inclusion of the new track at Indy. All the standard bells and whistles of visible car damage will be included as well, not to mention weather conditions, car setup, multiple racing views, replays and career stat tracking.

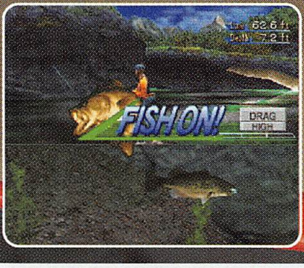
The game certainly looks nice, but whether or not the physics engine delivers the kind of driving experience players have grown to expect remains to be seen. It's also unclear whether or not *F1 2000*'s AI will properly reflect driver personalities. Will the same drivers always finish in the same places, or will the game feel more organic? It's still too early to tell—but in its present state, I can't get overly excited... it is, after all, just another Formula game. **EN**

Championship Bass

Preview | Developer: Pai, Inc. | Available: Spring. | Publisher: EA Sports | # of Players: 1





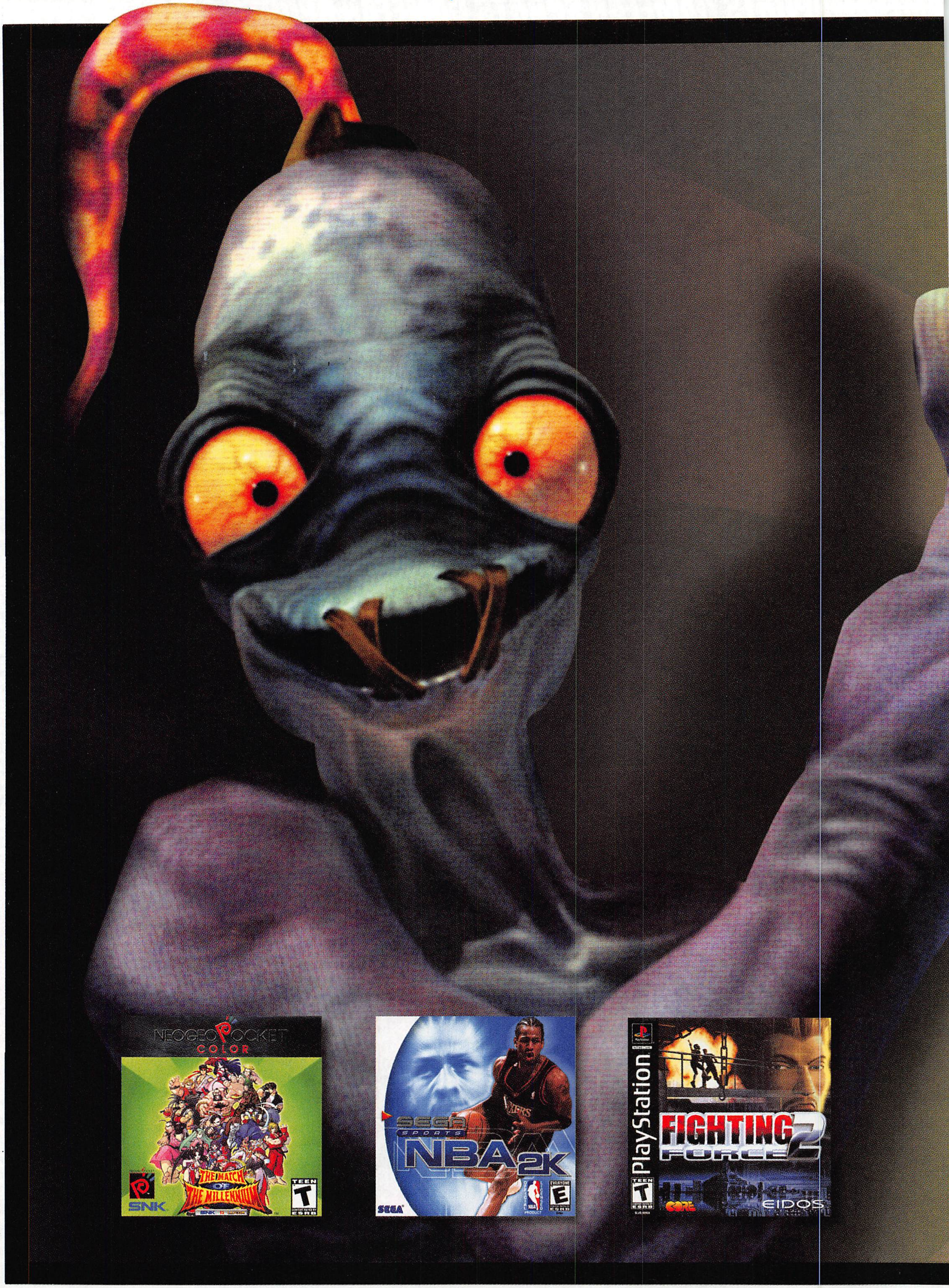


Wow... I don't know what I find more surprising, the fact that EA Sports is putting out a fishing title, or their disinclination to smother the game under an avalanche of unnecessary licenses. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining; I love the genre, and I'm constantly crossing my fingers in the hopes that I might stumble across a game that can live up to my fond memories of *Super Black Bass* (man, I really wanted to make it through a fishing article without mentioning this game, and look at that—I didn't even get outta the first paragraph). *Bass Landing* and *Fisherman's Bait* were pretty good, but not quite good enough...

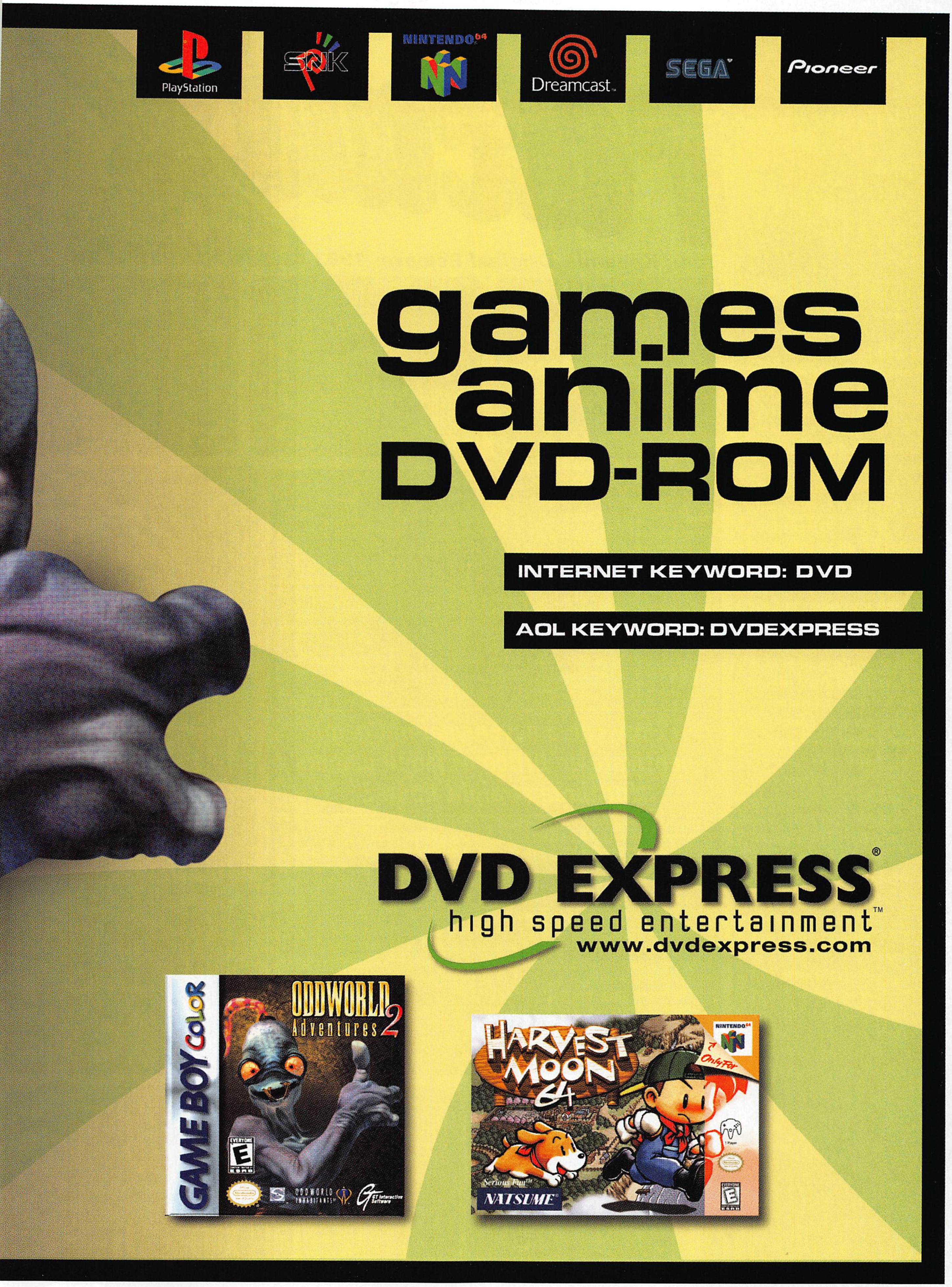
Like the other fishing titles out there, expect from *Championship Bass* a hybrid between angling simulation and arcade action. All of the sport's equipment and options will be available, and the fish AI will have those little scaly devils responding to the different types of lures and styles of fishing much as they would in real life. The actual battles will be much more arcade-like as well, attempting to infuse as much action and difficulty into a pastime (I'll only refer to fishing as a sport once per article) composed mostly of guys sitting around crushing 'empties' on their foreheads and eating PB&Js.

Championship Bass will come with plenty of available game options, from standard free play to tournaments, bass challenges and (surprise, surprise) a career mode. The challenges are a series of scenarios set up to test your abilities as an angler. Clearing the scenarios will give you access to secret lures that will better entice the fishies into striking.

O.K., I know, none of this sounds any different than any other fishing title currently on the market—but what did you expect, originality from video game developers? Don't make me laugh... (Note: The opinions of El Niño in no way reflect those of the rest of GameFan and its staff, etc. etc.) In the end, it'll all come down to how engrossing the gameplay is, and I'll leave that critique for an upcoming issue. **EN**



NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
THE MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM
SNK
TEEN
T
ESRB
SEGA SPORTS
NBA 2K
SEGA
EVERYONE
E
PlayStation
FIGHTING FORCE 2
CORE
EIDOS



PlayStation
SNK
NINTENDO64
Dreamcast
SEGA
Pioneer
games
anime
DVD-ROM
INTERNET KEYWORD: DVD
AOL KEYWORD: DVDEXPRESS
DVD EXPRESS®
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GAME BOY COLOR
ODDWORLD Adventures 2
HARVEST MOON 64
NATSUME

Dracula X

From: Konami Original Release: 1993

Of all the games that never made it to the U.S. TurboGrafx-16/Turbo Duo, there is one above all that we were really burned on: Konami's *Dracula X*. I'm not going to mince words—we were shafted. Dogged. Robbed. Ignored. Blown off. Shined on. Negged. Discarded. Disregarded. (Reubus' note: But not Dissed? C'mon, ECM—how long you been in Cali now?) Now, this wouldn't have been such a big a deal if it wasn't the final insult in a string of massive letdowns, cancellations and general apathy on the part of, well, everybody involved... including gamers. So why was this particular omission such a horrific atrocity? Why should you be so annoyed that 'just another video game' got passed over for U.S. release (heck, I'm almost used to it now)? Walk with me for a moment and all will become clear...







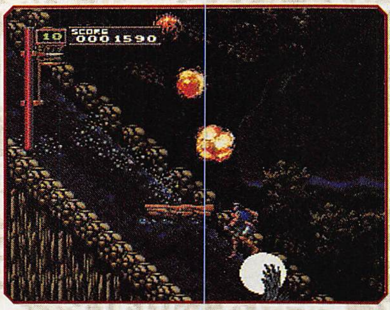
By now, I'm sure you've heard how everybody that's been lucky enough to snare a copy of PCE *Dracula X* has lauded it as the best *Castlevania* game going. I always chalked this up to the Haves lording it over the Have-Nots. After all, who could tell them otherwise, given that so few this side of the Pacific actually own a copy? Well, I won't go so far as to try and justify the insane prices this game commands on eBay (in excess of $200 a copy for a game that isn't remotely rare), but I will say that, given the chance, I'd fork it over—and it would be in your best interests (financial constraints withstanding) to do the same, at the soonest possible juncture.

And just what is it that makes *Dracula X* so good, so undeniably incredible? How could it possibly be better than *Super Castlevania IV* or *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (which are

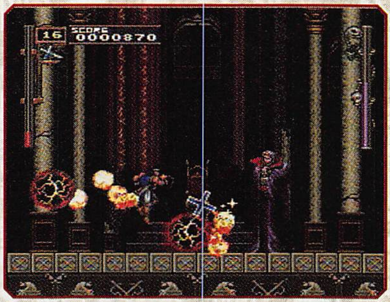
"How can a seven-year-old game captivate an office of jaded gamers for three straight hours?"

generally regarded as the prime specimens of the franchise)? How can a seven-year-old game captivate an office of jaded gamers for three straight hours of 'oohs' and 'aahs?' Well, it's a miracle, given the spec it's running under. See, by the time *Dracula X* made its appearance on the PC Engine/Duo, it was running under five-year-old hardware. And while it's true that most hardware ages like fine wine (or, rather, the software running on it), this was quite a sight to see in the day when the SNES and Sega Genesis—two systems that were always acknowledged to be more powerful on paper if (apparently) not in practice—ruled the console gaming roost.

Simply put, *Dracula X* running on the PCE Super CD-ROM System 2 crushes *Super Castlevania IV* and *Castlevania: Bloodlines*, its 16-bit contemporaries (between you and me, we'll just pretend the SNES rev of *CX* never existed, O.K.?). The most

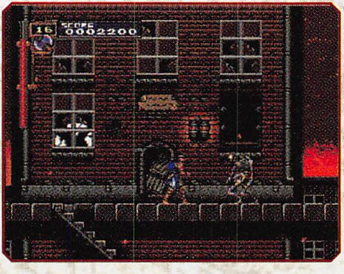





















stunning detail is that the game still manages to impress today, with its huge, screen-filling sprites, intricately animated characters **far** beyond those of its 16-bit brothers, glorious, achingly orchestrated CD audio that outdoes even *SOTN*'s stunning PCM score, and gameplay that easily equals—and in most cases exceeds—either of these two titles. Even now, you'd be stunned to hear that the game's running under 'mere' PCE kit. In fact, as a pure *Castlevania* title, it isn't even matched by its PS sequel... after all, the PS rev has more in common with *Metroid* than it does with the true *Castlevania* legacy, playable Richter or not.

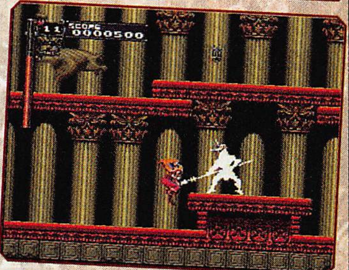
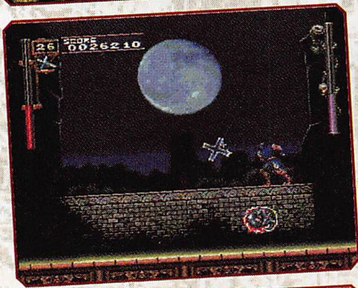
What it all boils down to is this: The PC Engine was one of the greatest console platforms ever conceived. The Genesis may go down as my all-time favorite system (unless, of course, you count the C64 as a 'console'), but the PCE's certainly a very serious contender for the title of Runner-Up. Unfortunately,

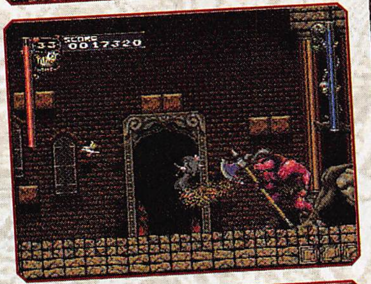
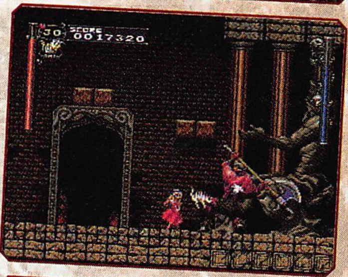
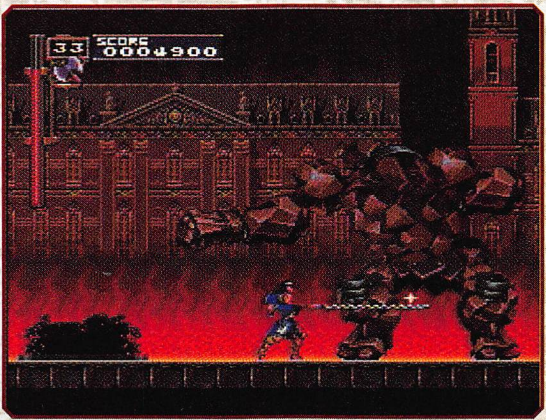
"The PC Engine was one of the greatest console platforms ever conceived."

due to the simple fact that nobody this side of the world (save a completely off-the-wall, underground U.K. PCE fan base) bought one, some ugly mismanagement by NEC and, well, gamer apathy, we never even knew it was here till it was gone—and with it went one of the greatest titles ever crafted. It's funny that the machine (and now, the game) is far more popular now, years after its death, than it ever was in 'life.'

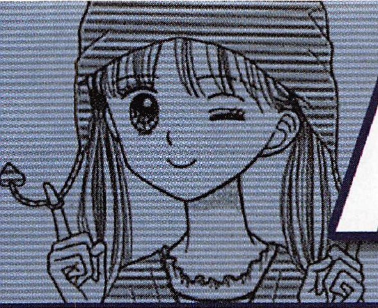
So what do you do now? Though it may be a bit pricey, you could track down one of the following: a Duo of any stripe (Turbo, R, RX—any one will play the game unmodified), a TG-16 with CD-ROM and Super System 2 card (and/or a PC Engine unit with CD-ROM and Super System card), or a SuperGrafx with CD-ROM adapter, Super CD-ROM drive plus and—you guessed it—a Super System card. Get them all together, score a copy of *Dracula X* (via eBay or outside sources, try www.videogamedepot.com) and prepare to have the time of your life. If that sounds like a little too large a cross to bear (almost made it without some sort of pseudo-religious reference... <ack>), pray to all that's holy that Konami decides to do a *Castlevania* collection featuring **all** the various iterations of its favorite son (including *MSX*, *Sharp* and arcade *Castlevanias*—the 'lost' titles, as it were). Believe me, you **need** to play this game as if your life depended on it. **ECM**







AnimeFan

Anime, Manga, J-pop, Asian Live Action, Otaku Culture

A Note from Shidoshi...

Okay, I'll admit it—I'm getting excited about the PlayStation 2 de chu. As I write there, we are a mere week and a half or so from its Japanese release de chu. Why am I excited de chu? Because the sooner it comes out, the sooner Konami will get to releasing *Silent Hill 2* de chu! I want that game de chu! [kicks himself in the head] Sorry, it's become habit. Anyhow, what else is there to say. If you don't already have a DVD player, I suggest you get one soon. By this time next year, I'll be willing to bet that, more times than not, if you want to see an anime subtitled, you'll have to get the DVD. [looking at Joe/Blue Mary/Terry ending pic from *KOF* which is currently the desktop pic on Shidoshi's second monitor] You know, why don't they make NeoGeo underwear like that? I bet it would sell like gang-busters... And how dare he draw Mary that cute! [stares longingly] Maaaaary..... ^_^

Audio Delights

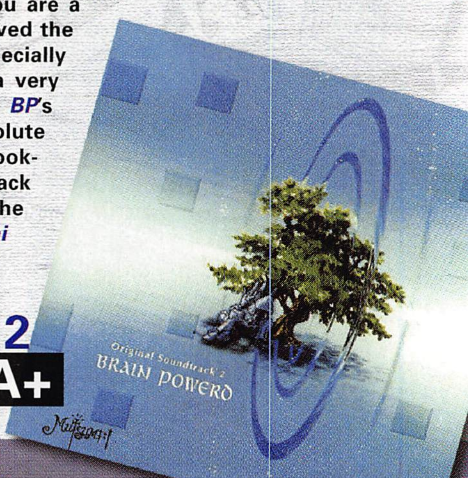
While the name Yoko Kanno may not mean anything to you right off of the bat, I can assure you that you know who she is. If I tell you that she is the person responsible for the brilliant soundtrack for *Brain Powerd*, and you've heard any of the music from the show, you'll be impressed. However, what if I then also tell you that she is the same musical genius who also crafted the sound-tracks for *Macross Plus*, *Cowboy BeBop*, *Turn-A Gundam*, was one half of the team who created the music for *Vision of Escaflowne*, and has contributed music to such titles as *Memories* and *Please Save My Earth*? Paying serious attention now? That's what I thought. The fact that Kanno has crafted so many different sound-tracks—all acclaimed by anime fans—is a testament to how talented and creative she is. Simply stating that you were responsible for scoring *Macross Plus*, or *Cowboy BeBop*, or *Escaflowne*, or *Brain Powerd* alone on a resume would be impressive. But to be responsible not only for some many great soundtracks, but to showcase so many different musical styles across them?



However, for proof of just how impressive her ability to create such varied types of music is, one needs only look at the *Brain Powerd* soundtracks on their own. Last issue, when I reviewed *BP*, I told you that this was one anime soundtrack that was just screaming for me to purchase it. Well, that is exactly what I did, and I question if I've ever made a better decision. This isn't the same basic main theme, remixed a variety of ways and slapped onto a CD. While listening through both *Brain Powerd OST 1* and *Brain Powerd OST 2*, it was near impossible for me to pick which song I liked best, which I thought was most powerful and crafted just right to convey the atmosphere and emotion it was meant to, simply because ALL of her tracks do exactly that. Whether it be a soft, melodious tune with the light sounds of strings and hushed vocals or the big, booming thunder of an entire orchestra which brings to mind images of a gigantic and bloody war, each track stands on its own. Sometimes you'll find a soundtrack has a few good tracks, sprinkled between a great deal of mediocre ones. With Kanno's *Brain Powerd* score, there are no weak links, and the collection of so many wonderful pieces of music is what makes this soundtrack as strong as it is.

I can't recommend to you one OST over the other, because there simply is no "lesser" one. The only solution here—and yes, it is the ONLY solution—is for you to pick up both volumes. Having only one of the *Brain Powerd* OSTs would be like having only one of the discs to Shen Mue: anything less gives you an incomplete experience. If you really must choose—and I mean this should be a choice of getting both CDs, or only getting one and still being able to eat—then I can only say that my choice would come down to which you prefer, the opening or ending theme. OST 1 contains "Field of Love", the show's ending theme. Field of Love's power may not be as instantly noticeable, as the song is softer, less brash and wild than *BP*'s opening theme. Yet, if you sit back and let yourself truly listen to the song, its full effect will hit you with amazing force. Then there is "In My Dream", the opening theme song which sits contently as Track 8 on OST 2. While not written by Kanno, I've got to admit that this one is a guilty pleasure for me. Loud, harsh, and completely cheesy J-rock, In My Dream is the perfect song to get you pumped, get your adrenaline going, and when watching the show, to get you excited for what is about to come.

If you haven't come to realize just how wonderful Yoko Kanno's soundtrack for *Brain Powerd* is, or how much I love it, then let's cut to the chase: BUY THESE CDS. If you are a fan of Kanno's work, if you loved the music her other projects (especially *Macross Plus*, which shares a very similar feel and style with *BP*'s music), then this is an absolute must-own. If you are simply looking for a new anime soundtrack to pick up, and you want the very best, this is it. *—shidoshi*



Brain Powerd OST 1

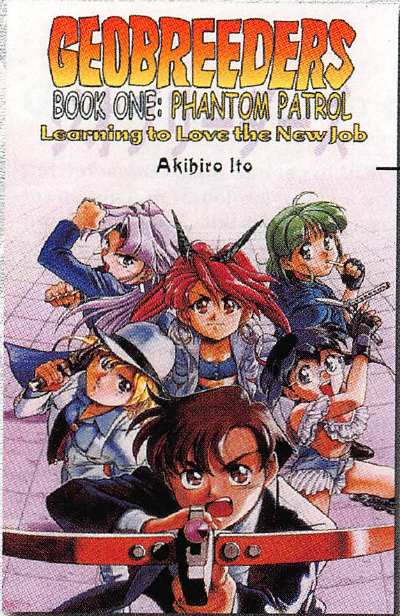
Yoko Kanno • Soundtrack • JVC
20 Tracks • 1 CD • Jpn Release

A+

Brain Powerd OST 2

Yoko Kanno • Soundtrack • JVC
18 Tracks • 1 CD • Jpn Release

A+



Manga Scene

Geobreeders: Book 1

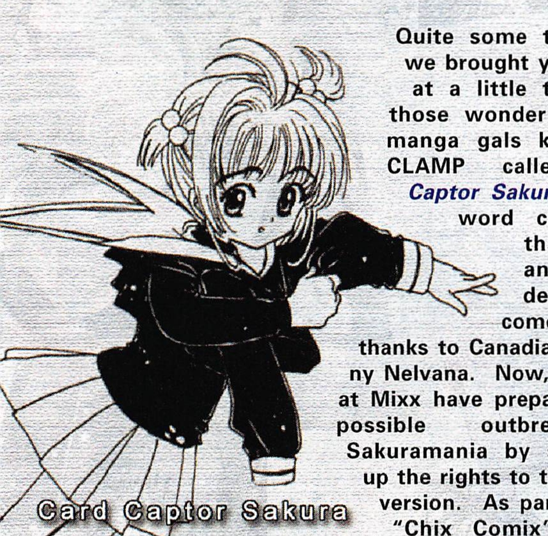
$15.95 US • Act/Cmdy • CPM Manga • 13+
206 pages • US Format • Graphic Novel

A-

Starting this month, you'll begin to see coverage of CPM Manga titles in the pages of AnimeFan. While I did review a title of theirs before (*Call Me Princess*), from now on such reviews will be commonplace, adding an even bigger variety of manga coverage to AnimeFan. Anyhow, to kick things off, I sat down with the first graphic novel volume of *Geobreeders*. The thing which impressed me the most about the *Geobreeders* anime, and which is also true when it comes to its manga counterpart, is the great mix and balance of comedy and seriousness. Indeed, *Geobreeders* is a comedy, but it's also got a dark and slightly sinister side, and this face of the story isn't tarnished any by the jokes and humor that are brought into play. As well, the characters aren't just your cast of cute and silly girls to help play up the jokes. Each shows a great deal of personality, and the cast doesn't feel weighed down by any dead-weight characters.



The print reproduction quality seems to differ a bit between *Geobreeders* and your typical Viz publication. Screen tones don't seem as subtle as they do in most Viz manga, giving a look that is rougher yet makes the different shades stand out more. It'll take me a while to get used to after seeing so much Viz manga, but I like it. After checking out the *Geobreeders* manga, this is one title that I would continue to keep up with even if I wasn't doing this for a living anymore. It's smart, it's funny, it's charming, it's got that right balance of characters and action and humor to make a series that is a joy to spend time with. $15.95 couldn't be better spent on a graphic novel. —*shidoshi*



Card Captor Sakura

$2.95 US • Mahou Shoujo • Mixx • 5+
48 pages • US Format • Monthly

B

Quite some time ago, we brought you a look at a little title from those wonder anime / manga gals known as CLAMP called *Card Captor Sakura*. Then, word came out that the anime was destined to come our way thanks to Canadian company Nelvana. Now, the folks at Mixx have prepared for a possible outbreak of Sakuramania by snatching up the rights to the manga version. As part of their "Chix Comix" [groan] line, for a measly $2.95 each month you'll be able to follow the exploits of young Sakura, her companion Kero-chan, and their adventures in trying to capture all of the escaped Clow Cards. To do this, Sakura transforms into a "Card Captor" and does battle using the powers of the cards she has already obtained. In *Card Captor Sakura*, CLAMP gives us a magical girl saga that isn't as brainless as the usual fair. Sure, this is no Shakespeare, but it's still got a bit more thought behind it than your typical "stick a cute girl in a sailor suit and call it a story" anime or manga title (not that there isn't a certain charm in those kinds of shows, of course). If you are the type who can have fun and enjoy cute and/or silly things, then this is a title you might delight in reading. Of course, *CCS* is very kid friendly, so if you know a younger anime fan looking for something new to read, here you go. *Card Captor Sakura* is a great addition to the US manga scene, and is a great purchase for the young (or young at heart) fans out there. —*shidoshi*



Special Feature

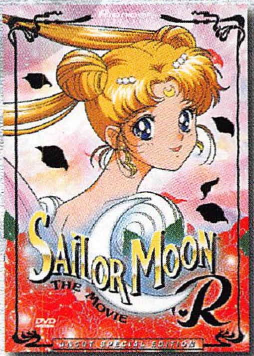
For anyone out there who purchased copies of the *Macross Plus* DVDs, you may have noticed that the discs contained a few technical errors on them. Manga Ent. has finally released good news for all fans out there, announcing that they have started a trade-in program to help those of you who do own copies return them for corrected versions.

If you wish to have your copies of the *Macross Plus* DVDs replaced, here is what you do. Get your DVDs together, make sure they contain everything they included originally (disc, case, cover slip), and inside the DVD case also include your name, address, and telephone number. Pack everything up, and ship them off to Manga. Manga will be accepting exchanges until Monday, May 8th. If you have any question at all, you can e-mail Manga at dvd@manga.com.

Manga Video
Attn: Macross Plus DVD
P.O. Box 482
Lincolnshire, IL
60069-0482

Anime Drive-In

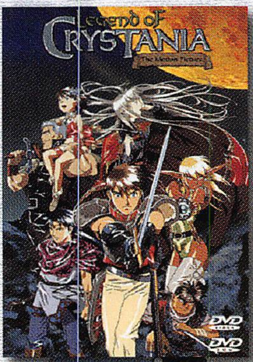
Sailor Moon R DVD



If you can't count on anything else, you can almost always count on Pioneer to release a great DVD—it seems anymore that they would have to actually try to screw things up. The same is indeed true with *Sailor Moon R: the Movie*. Instantly you are hit with beautiful packaging—a great shot of Usagi on the cover, with foil stamped gold and red shimmering around her. For the *Sailor Moon* fans longing for a subtitled, un-Americanized release, it's here. As well, the original English cast is back for the dub, with US names and voices for those who like such things. Simple, yet elegant and animated menus give access to a great little collection of extras—such as the ability to watch the powers and transformation sequences for the scouts in either Japanese or English. *Sailor Moon* has never looked, sounded, or been treated better in the US than it is here thanks to Pioneer. *—shidoshi*

Legend of Crystania DVD

It may have taken a while for ADV to get into the DVD market, but after deciding to, they've done a smashing job of making up for lost time. They recently released a flurry of titles, and they've got MANY more on the way in the near future. Right now, we get a DVD version of *Legend of Crystania: the Movie*. A few minor nit-picks aside (which, to be honest, I always seem to have for DVD transfers), this is a crisp, clean, and full of color transfer. The masters of DVD menus, ADV gives us a selection of easy to navigate and nice looking menus (especially the main one), but the language selection menu lacks any indication that I could see of what vocal and subtitle tracks you have selected. Character profiles, an image slide show, two trailers for the movie, and twelve different trailers for other ADV titles are included, as well as DVD-ROM web connection. Another great release from ADV to strengthen their DVD library and leave anime fans with even less cash. *—shidoshi*



Nazca Vol. 1

Adventure • TV (3 eps) • Pioneer • 13+
75 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B

500 years ago, a bloody war ravaged the Incan Empire. The losing side, in an effort to turn the tide, brings about a power that almost destroys the entire Earth. Now, in present day Japan, the aftershocks of this war are being felt. The souls of many of the Incan warriors have been reborn, centering around a Japanese student named Kyoji Miura. He isn't aware of this fact until his mentor, Tate, has had his soul awakened and comes to realize the history these two have together. Once enemies, fate will cause these friends to fight once more—a fight that will re-ignite the bloody war of the past, and threaten the safety of the entire planet once again.

Nazca draws its inspiration from an area rarely touched in anime: South American culture, most specifically the Inca. It's nice to see an attempt to bring some fresh ideas into anime, and if for nothing else, *Nazca* should be commended for this. My only regret is that I thought it actually didn't go far enough—I'd love to see it crafted more upon such aspects and less on traditional anime building blocks. This Incan flavor also leads to some very non-traditional character designs, which I'm sure will either be liked or disliked by viewers with little middle ground.

As hard as this is to say, I actually find myself unsatisfied with the quality of a Pioneer DVD. While there are moments when *Nazca* indeed looks good, most of the time the show seems muted and lacking in richness and color. I have to wonder if this isn't simply due to a bad transfer for the series, however, because in every other aspect this DVD transfer is stellar. In fact, I noticed not even one hint of compression, a hopeful sign towards a future where DVD artifacts will indeed be artifacts of the past.

After finishing the first volume of *Nazca*, I'm honestly not sure what I think of it. I certainly don't dislike the show, but at the same time, I can't really say that I like it either. My interest in the show at this point is almost totally for the curiosity of watching a series that is doing something different than the rest. What was it that I didn't get into about *Nazca*? The characters were interesting, if a bit one-dimensional at this point. The story, while bolstered from the Incan link, did suffer from being a cookie-cutter anime tale in almost every other regard. Then there was the awkward looking CG, yet thankfully it was hardly used. No, there was just something about *Nazca* that didn't click for me. As of this moment, I'd simply recommend that if you are curious about *Nazca*, check it out for yourself and come to your own conclusions. *—shidoshi*










CAUTION
Keep hands away from cage!
"This is one of those shows that, after watching, you just sit there thinking, 'Wow-that was cool.'" Shidoshi, GameFan Magazine
Pet Shop of Horrors
From the Anime Dreamteam: Hisashi Abe (Vampire Hunter D), Rintaro (Final Fantasy) and Yoshiaki Kawajiri (Bio Hunter, Ninja Scoll, Wicked City)
URBAN VISION
Pet Shop of Horrors VOLUME 2
COMING IN MAY!
The terms of sale are non-negotiable, and a breach of contract can be deadly.
Man-eating fish, matricidal rabbits, mythical beasts of ancient legends — Welcome to Chinatown's most unique pet shop. This way, please - there is a variety of exotic creatures to choose from; and the perfect pet for everyone waits here to be brought home and cherished. But be careful; what you see is not necessarily what you get.
UV1058
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Run time: Approximately 60 minutes (contains two 30 minute episodes)
$19.95 s.r.p. VHS English Dubbed
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Fencer Minerva

Adventure • OAV • CPM • 16+
138 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

D

Two youths, the young prince Sho and his friend Diana, are separated when Diana's father rises up and kills Sho's father so that he may take the throne. Years later, as a young woman, Diana is out among the people when she decides to save a young girl from being sold as a slave. Unfortunately, while making their escape, the two girls are captures by slave traders and forced to live a life of servitude. When a young warrior impresses the leader of the slave traders with his skill, he is given Diana as his servant. She is shocked to find out that this warrior is none other than Sho, who she thought was long dead. Diana pledges her servitude to Sho, while Sho vows to reclaim the throne and avenge his slain father.

Before anything else, I've got to mention the dub for *Fencer Minerva*, because it is more than likely the first thing you'll notice. In this day and age, with the amount of quality dubs that we have out there, the dub job we are given here is not acceptable. It isn't even the fact that half of the cast sound like they aren't even trying to be serious about voice acting; it is things like a line that is obviously three different tracks sliced together, or a character who has two COMPLETELY different voices in the matter of a few seconds. Next is the visual quality of the show, which is sadly uninspired and terribly generic.

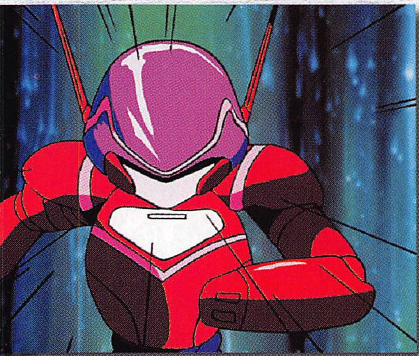


Then we get to a deeper aspect of the show, a major part of the storyline. The fact that the main heroine is content to live the life of a slave to the man she loves is certainly questionable, but isn't instantly horrible. To be honest, if handled right, it could make a very interesting premise for a drama. However, in *FM*, almost every single female character in the show is not only a slave, but most enjoy their place in life—there is not one positive female character to be seen. This is, without question, a title for guys who suffer from a "male superiority" complex, and I honestly felt a bit dirty watching the show. It truly baffles me that a company that has released such quality titles as *Record of Lodoss War*, *Slayers*, *Geobreeders*, *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, *Birdy the Mighty*, and *Night on the Galactic Railroad* would release a title such as this. I can honestly find NO redeeming quality in *Fencer Minerva* (besides getting so much anime on one VHS tape). —*shidoshi*

BubbleGum Crisis 2040 Vol 4

Adventure • TV (2 eps) • ADV Films • 12+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

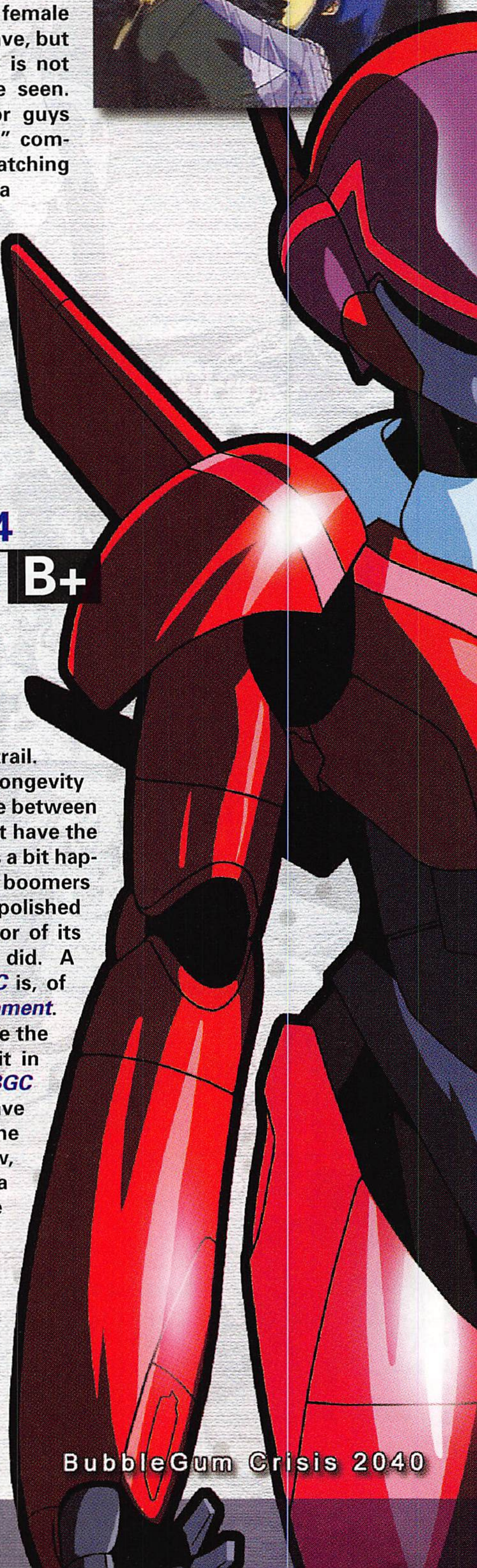
B+



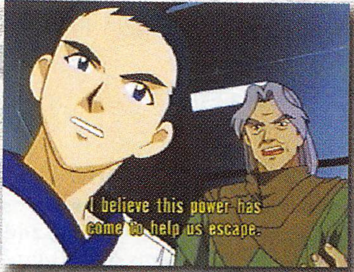
The Knight Sabers have faced a host of Boomers before, but this time, they are up against a giant monster that EATS Boomers. Where did this thing come from, and is there any possible way to stop it? The Knight Sabers aren't the only ones interested in the monster, however—both Genom and the AD Police are also hot on its trail. With tensions rising between the girls, threatening the longevity of the team, can they defeat this new foe? The difference between *BGC 2040* and the original series is that *2040* just doesn't have the grit and moody atmosphere the original had. The tone is a bit happier, more upbeat, more promising. The characters and boomers and landscapes and everything else all have this clean, polished feel to them. This adds a certain personality and flavor of its own, yet doesn't quite have that same charm the first did. A great comparison here would be that the original *BGC* is, of course, *Blade Runner*, while *BGC 2040* is more like *Fifth Element*. And, just like *Fifth Element*, while *BGC 2040* might not have the true richness and depth that *BGC* has, it makes up for it in spades in design and cast. Call me a heathen, but I think *BGC 2040* takes the cast in directions the original saga should have gone. In *BGC*, there was the rebel girl, the cute one, the smart one, and... what exactly WAS Linna's niche? Now, each character feels more like a person with a past and a reason for living and a purpose for doing what they do. The only real pitfall for the show so far, and this is common among many TV shows, is that after the first couple of episodes, the show starts to feel like it's just spinning its wheels without really going anywhere. New episode, new type of boomer, find way to defeat it before a half hour is up. Even *Evangelion* felt like this one you hit its middle, though, so that's certainly not a sign of doom for this series. While *BubbleGum Crisis 2040* doesn't replace the beloved original series, it is a very nice complement to it, and provides a refreshing new look at the Knight Sabers. —*shidoshi*







BubbleGum Crisis 2040



Ehrgeiz

Adventure • OAV • Anime Village • 15+
48 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B

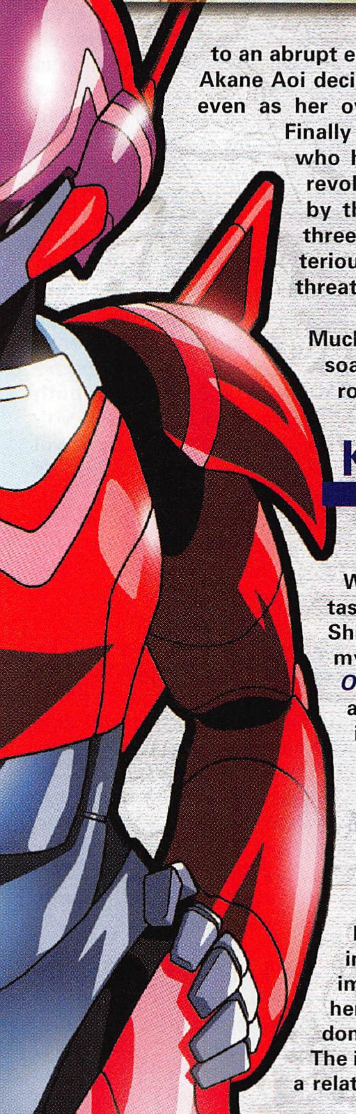




First and foremost, no, this has nothing to do with the Namco/Square fighting game.

In the depths of space, three different groups of people will soon find that destiny has seen fit to bring them all together, by means of a mysterious entity known simply as "S." First is the ragtag group of outcasts, whose simple existence living in the abandoned Next 7 colony is about to come to an abrupt end. Next is the Next military, whose captain Akane Aoi decides to control the fate of others around her even as her own fate begins slipping from her fingers. Finally is Master Hal and his group of Tera rebels, who has called upon the power of "S" to bring revolution to the universe, only to be driven mad by the immense power. As the lives of these three groups begin to violently overlap, the mysterious "S" once again makes an appearance, and threatens the safety of everyone involved.

Much like *Brain Powerd*, *Ehrgeiz* is more of a soap opera involving mecha than it is a giant robot anime. Which is good, really, because in this we get a better plot, storyline, and cast of characters, and less reliance on have giant robot battles carry the full weight of the show. Sure, the tale of a powerful military, a band of rebels, and the third party which forces their lives to intertwine isn't anything new, but it is done well enough here to re-ignite the idea for another go. While I didn't fall in love with *Ehrgeiz* as I did *BP*, the show was interesting and enthralling enough to hold my interest and make me curious about future episode (especially thanks to the cliffhanger ending on episode 8). For me, if *Ehrgeiz* were on US television, it would be one of those shows which I wouldn't change my life to see each week, but would certainly watch if I had the chance. I sort of question Bandai's releasing such similar titles at the same time (this and *BP*, *Cowboy BeBop* and *Outlaw Star*), because it's quite likely that many fans will choose one over the other and miss out on seeing both. So, even if you're already knee-deep in "mecha drama," you'll want to consider checking out *Ehrgeiz*, even if it means putting it off for a bit until another series ends its run. —*shidoshi*



Kodomo no Omocha

AF Best of the Issue!

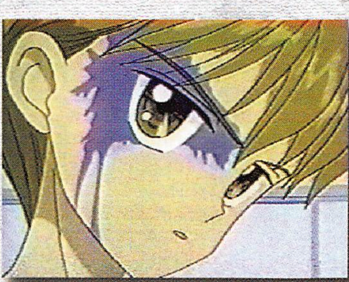
Comedy • TV • Japan Only • 8+
n/a • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

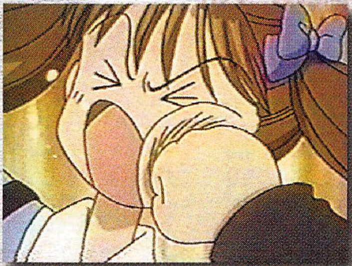
A+

Whew... reviewing a title like this is a daunting task... thanks so much for dumping it on me, Shidoshi. [*Wry smile...*] You can't fully understand my problem until you've seen *Kodomo no Omocha (Child's Toy)*; I can think of no other anime title that so utterly defies explanation, interpretation and categorization. One moment it's cute and cuddly, the next poignant and tragic, the next strange and hilarious (and sometimes several of the above simultaneously). Yet the spastic mood and scene changes are somehow woven into a coherent (and funny, and moving) story. Akito Hayama and his stooges are causing havoc in their sixth-grade class, bullying other students and even teachers that get in their way. But this unstoppable force meets an immovable object in Sana Kurata, our hyperactive heroine, who only wants to get some studying done and takes it upon herself to restore the peace. The iron wills of Sana and Akito inevitably clash, and a relationship of grudging respect forms. Or is there more to it than that? Well, it's a little hard to tell, because outwardly Akito has all the emotion of a slab of granite. Sana, however, is a little more expressive. Actually, a lot more expressive. Her preferred methods of sharing her feelings include spontaneously busting out in nonsense raps and wild, arm-flailing tantrums, though, so the message gets a little muddled. Anyone who feared that the story might be a little sappy can breathe a sigh of relief now. But this is shoujo anime, after all, so you can count on a side of romance with your order of insanity. I cannot recommend this TV series highly enough, especially if you liked *Elf Princess Rane* (which is from the same director). Blending way-over-the-top comedy like this with a serious story would ordinarily be a disaster, but *Kodocha* pulls it off beautifully. —*Jay McGavren*

(*This show MUST MUST MUST come to the US. It is absolutely the coolest, as is Sana-chan... —shidoshi*)









Kodomo no Omocha

AF News Service

Digital Princess

As of my writing this, the internet has been going crazy for the past two weeks over news on a DVD release of *Princess Mononoke*. As of a few days ago, it seems that the disc is indeed coming, and here is what we know. *Princess Mononoke* will see release on both VHS and DVD on June 13th of this year. The VHS will be dubbed, while the DVD will have English and Japanese language tracks, as well as closed caption subtitled (aka "dubtitles"). The DVD will also include the theatrical trailer and a featurette, and the release will have a running time of 133 minutes. As of this point, Disney supposedly has DVD rights ONLY for *Mononoke*, and not any of the other Studio Ghibli releases. The dubtitle factor is a real shame (meaning the subtitles are based off of the dub script, and not a unique subtitle script), but to be honest, I'll put up with that to get this fabulous anime film released the way it should be.

DigiManga

First *Pokemon* hit the manga scene, and now it seems that *Digimon* will be following in its footsteps. According to a spokesperson from Dark Horse comics, they will begin publishing the *Digimon: Digital Monsters* manga in English in the US, starting this June. So, if you are a fan of the series, be sure to check the manga shelf at your local comic shop starting this June.

Gundam Comes Home

Want to see *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing*, but don't want to try to catch it on the Cartoon Network (or in case you don't get the Cartoon Network)? Well, good news. Starting in May, Bandai will be releasing Gundam Wing on both VHS and DVD in the US.

The VHS release will be available both in subtitled and dubbed formats, with each volume containing three episodes (except for the first, which will contain four). The first volume of the DVD release (which will contain both English and Japanese vocal tracks and English subtitled) will contain five episodes, which each volume after that containing four. As well, the DVD will contain *Gundam Wing* commercials, teasers, trailers, an image gallery, and possibly other yet to be named extras. Even better, Bandai has said that they are going to be working to make sure that the DVD release sees a monthly release schedule, with each volume priced at $24.95. The first volume for both the VHS and the DVD release will contain a special limited edition 3D jacket cover, which will only be contained with the first run for both DVD and VHS.

For those who do want to wait to catch it on the Cartoon Network, no doubt you've seen the commercials that have been running for it by now. There will actually be two versions of *Gundam Wing* show on the Cartoon Network—an edited version running in earlier time slots, and an unedited version running in the late-night weekend Toonami programming block.

Asamiya Invade America

Famed manga artist Kia Asamiya—responsible for titles such as *Silent Mobius*, *Dark Angel*, *Martian Successor Nadesico*, and *Steam Detectives*—has announced that he will be making an "American tour" this year. Here's a brief rundown of where he will be and what you can expect from his stops.

San Diego Comic Con International, taking place from July 20th through July 23rd. This will be an opportunity for Mr. Asamiya to promote several new projects he has coming up, including a new US comic label called "Tronix."

Wizard World Chicago convention in, you guessed it, Chicago, which takes place from August 4th through August 6th. For this con, Mr. Asamiya plans to have some sort of special poster that will be exclusive to Wizard World, and may also do some promotion of his upcoming line of English manga sketchbooks.

McFarlane Spawns Anime

McFarlane toys (know for some amazingly detailed and cool toys, even if some are based around that highly overrated Spawn series), through an agreement with Pioneer, have a few interesting new toys up their sleeves—in the way of an anime line!

No, not those bizarre "Manga Spawn" things, but figures based off of actual anime characters. Who can we expect to see? How about Tetsuo and Keneda from the anime classic *Akira* (Keneda's motorcycle will also be released), Vash the Stampede from *Trigun* (which will be seeing release in the US in the near future), and Ryoko from *Tenchi Muyo!*. As well, more figures are planned for the future, such as an entire *Tenchi Muyo!* line (or, at least, a few more based on main characters).

ADV's Big Announcements

At Katsucon, a recent anime and manga convention, ADV Films had a number of very interesting and major announcements. Here's a basic rundown of what they had to say.

First, ADV will be forming a new label called "ADV Fansubs" (no, you're not the only one to raise an eyebrow at the name). The idea behind the label is to release "quality, subtitled video products directly to the fans who want them at an accelerated pace and attractive price structure." What this means is that, as the market watches sales and support for subtitled VHS releases drop dramatically (which is what is unfortunately happening), ADV is looking for a new way to pitch subtitled VHS releases and bring them to fans outside of the typical retail outlets (places such as Tower and Suncoast) who are looking to start carrying only dub VHS releases. The ADV Fansub line of titles will be available from their website, online and mail order retailers, and through sales at anime conventions. The first two titles which will see release under this new label will be *City Hunter TV* and *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water*, both of which will begin in March. Each volume will contain four episodes, and will carry a price of $19.98. On one hand, it's sad to see the subtitled VHS market getting rocked as hard as it is, but on the other, more episodes and a lower price for subtitled releases have been something that needed to happen for a long time.

Another new label ADV has created is ADV Music. ADV Music will be responsible for not only releasing US pressings of many popular anime soundtracks, but will also release soundtracks for original projects, such as their upcoming *SiN* title. Most ADV Music releases will retail for $14, and the first four releases they have planned are *Akira* Symphonic Soundtrack, *Macross II* OST, *Macross Plus* OST and *Macross Plus* OST 2, all of which will be available soon, if not by the time you read this.

Next, a quick run down of the titles ADV has announced for release in the recent past; *Rurouni Kenshin*; *Shin Getter Robo*; *Sorcerous Stabber Orphen*; *The Samurai* and live action titles including *Dragon Blue*; *Gamera—Advent of Legion* and *Gamera vs Irys*; *Lady Battle Cop*; *The Hypnotist*; *Parasite Eve*; *Plugasari* and *Silk & Steel*.

As far as recent acquisitions, ADV has picked up the rights to the *Martian Successor Nadesico* movie "Prince of Darkness," *Arc the Lad*, *Chivass* (Shibasu 1, 2, 3), the *Melty Lancer* series, *Power Stone*, and *Excel Saga*.

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Hocus Pocus

codes, hints & strategies



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Code of the Month!

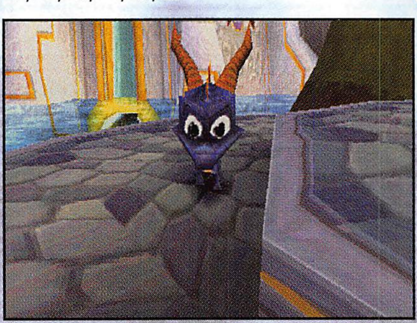
Spyro 2

PlayStation

To get all the abilities in the game, pause the game and hit ●, ●, ●, ●, ■.

To play in Flat Mode, pause the game and hit ←, →, ←, →, L2, R2, L2, R2, then ■.

To change Spyro into various colors, pause the game during gameplay and enter the following commands for the respective color:
Yellow: ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, ■, R1, R2, L1, L2, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ↑
Green: ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, ■, R1, R2, L1, L2, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ▲
Blue: ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, ■, R1, R2, L1, L2, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ✖
Red: ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, ■, R1, R2, L1, L2, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ●
Pink: ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, ■, R1, R2, L1, L2, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ■
Black: ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, ■, R1, R2, L1, L2, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ↓



For Big Head Mode, pause the game during gameplay and press ↑, ↑, ↑, ↑, R1, R1, R1, R1 and ●. Spyro's head will be much bigger when you un-pause the game.

To view the *Crash Team Racing* demo, hold L1 and R2 and press ■ at the intro menu screen.

Killer Loop *Unlock Vehicles*



At the main menu screen, hold the Start button and enter the following commands for the respective vehicles:

H&K Class 2: ↓, ←, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ←
H&K Class 3: ↓, ←, ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↑, →
H&K Class 4: ↓, →, ↑, ←, ↓, ←, ↑, →
Pulse Class 3: ↓, ←, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, →
Pulse Class 4: ↓, ←, ↑, →, ↓, →, ↑, ←



Fighting Force 2 *Unlock Vehicles*



At the title screen, when "Press Start" appears, hold L1 + L2 + R1 + ▲ + ✖ + ← and press Start. After starting a new game, a level select will appear. Now, when you start a game, you'll be nearly invincible, and any weapon you pick up will have infinite ammo.



Wu-Tang Shaolin Style

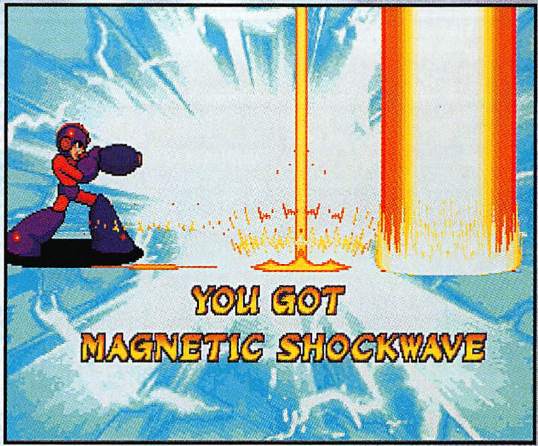
All Characters
At the main menu, press →, →, →, →, ←, ←, ←, ←, ■, ●, ■, ●

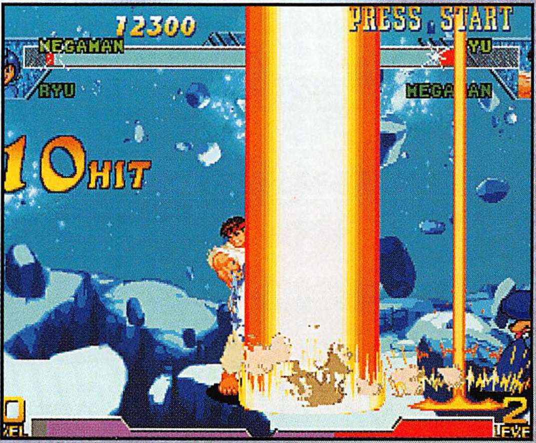
Violence control
Enter at start screen: ▲, ●, ✖, ✖, ■, ▲, ●,

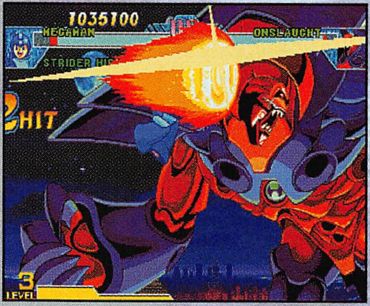
Marvel vs. Capcom EX

Use Mega Man's Magnetic Shockwave Super

When you beat the game with Mega Man, he'll receive the Magnetic Shockwave attack. In order to use this attack in the game, beat it with Mega Man on any difficulty setting, and when you start a new game, highlight Mega Man on the character select screen. Press and hold Select, then select Mega Man. Now, when you play the game, perform a quarter-circle back motion (down, diag. down/back, back) + two punches to activate Mega Man's Magnetic Shockwave Super!









Crazy Taxi

Port 3 Hidden Options

Plug a controller into the third Dreamcast controller port, and start the game. During gameplay, press the Start button on that controller, and you'll be able to access the following hidden options by press the corresponding buttons on the controller plug into port 3:

First-Person Mode

Press the B button to access this view; press A to return to normal view mode.

Dynamic Camera Mode: Press the Y button to access this view; press A to return to normal view mode.

Speedometer: Press the X button five times and a speedometer will appear in the lower right corner.

Taxi Bike

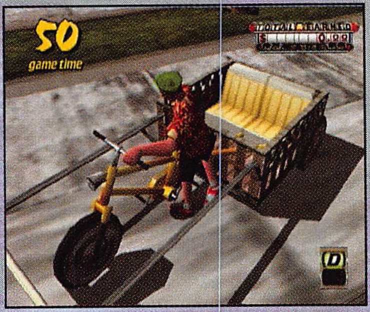
To get the Taxi Bike without having to finish all the Crazy Boxes, select either Arcade or Original mode, and at the character select screen, press L, R, L, R, L and R. You MUST press this sequence of buttons quickly. There's a timing to the R and L Shoulder button sequence, and if you do it too slow or too fast, you won't get the Taxi Bike. Select your character, and if you input the code correctly, you'll hear a bicycle bell. Now you'll be riding on the super-quick and light taxi bike!

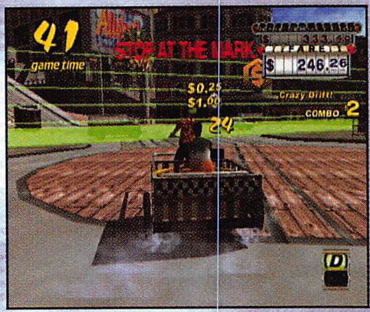
Another Day

To start the game in the other part of town, press R twice and hold R Shift at the Character Selection screen. Now select any character, and you'll start the game facing the other part of town called "Another Day."

Expert Mode

To play in Expert Level (with no stop indicators or arrows to guide you), press and hold L + R Trigger and the Start button after the Mode Selection screen. The words "Expert" should appear at the bottom left corner of the Character Select screen.









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Alexi Lalas International Soccer

Enable All Secret Teams
800e4d3cffff

Home Team Scores 10
8011ff54000a

Home Team Scores 0
8011ff540000

Away Team Scores 10
80120178000a

Away Team Scores 0
8.01202E+11

ECW Hardcore Revolution

Infinite Creation Points
800680d00000

Infinite Health P1
d00e0ec28006

Infinite Health P1
800e10b20000

No Health P1
d00e0ec28006
800e10b200ff

Infinite Time Out Of Ring P1
d0038ec00098
800e0fa80350

Press [Select] Quick Count On P2
d00c62600100
800e2e200000

Press [Select] Quick Count On P3
d00c62600100
800e4c1c0000

Press [Select] Quick Count On P4
d00c62600100
800e6a180000

P1 Can't Be Pinned
d003857c0128
800e10380000

Press[X] Quick Pin P2
d00c62600040
800e2eb00086

Press[X] Quick Pin P3
d00c62600040
800e4cac0086

Press[X] Quick Pin P4
d00c62600040
800e6aa80086

Infinite Health P2
d00e2da2800e
800e2f2a0000

No Health P2
d00e2da2800e
800e2f2a00ff

Infinite Time Out Of Ring P2
d0038ec00098
800e2e200350

Press [Select] Quick Count On P1
d00c62640100
800e0fa80000

Press [Select] Quick Count On P3
d00c62640100
800e4c1c0000

Press [Select] Quick Count On P4
d00c62640100
800e6a180000

P2 Can't Be Pinned
d003857c0128
800e2eb00000

Press[X] Quick Pin P1
d00c62640040
800e10380086

Press[X] Quick Pin P3
d00c62640040
800e4cac0086

Press[X] Quick Pin P4
d00c62640040
800e6aa80086

Infinite Health P3
d00e4ba6800c
800e4d260000

No Health P3
d00e4ba6800c
800e4d2600ff

Infinite Time Out Of Ring P3
d0038ec00098
800e4c1c0350

Press [Select] Quick Count On P1
d00c62680100
800e0fa80000

Press [Select] Quick Count On P2
d00c62680100
800e2e200000

Press [Select] Quick Count On P4
d00c62680100
800e6a180000

P3 Can't Be Pinned
d003857c0128
800e4cac0000

Press[X] Quick Pin P1
d00c62680040
800e10380086

Press[X] Quick Pin P2
d00c62680040

Press[X] Quick Pin P2
800e2eb00086

Press[X] Quick Pin P4
d00c62680040
800e6aa80086

Infinite Health P4
d00e69a2800c
800e6b220000

No Health P4
d00e69a2800c
800e6b2200ff

Infinite Time Out Of Ring P4
d0038ec00098
800e6a180350

Formula 1 '99

Quick Win
d00cca4c0003
800cca4c0005
d00d48300000
800d48300005
d00d48300005
800e0d9c0000
d00d48300005
800e0f3c0000
d00d48300005
800e10bc0000
d00d48300005
800e1eac0004

K-1 Grand Prix

High Stamina P1
800e5ee60144

High Stamina P2
800e61c20144

Infinite Rush (Both Players)
800dce2e2400

Hit Anywhere
800db9022400

Low Stamina P1
800e5ee60000

Low Stamina P2
800e61c20000

Infinite Health P1
800dc4340002
800dc43616a0

Infinite Health P1
800dc4440008
800dc44616a0

No Health P1
800e5ee00000
800e5ee20000

No Health P2
800e61bc0000
800e61be0000

P2 Down Gauge Empty
800e61cc0000
800e61cc0096

P1 Down Gauge Empty
800e5ef00000

P1 Down Gauge Full
800e5ef00096

P2 Infinite Rush
800e61c20128

P2 No Rush
800e61c20000

P1 Infinite Rush
800e5ee60128

P1 No Rush
800e5ee60000

Marvel Vs. Capcom: Clash Of The Superheroes

P1 Infinite Health
8007c1240090

P1 75% Health
d007c1240090
8007c124006c

P1 50% Health
d007c1240090
8007c1240048

P1 25% Health
d007c1240090
8007c1240024

P1 1 Hit Kill
d007c1240090
8007c1240001

P1 Instant Death
8007c1240000

P2 Infinite Health
8007c5340090

P2 75% Health
d007c5340090
8007c534006c

P2 50% Health
d007c5340090

P2 50% Health
8007c5340048

P2 25% Health
d007c5340090

P2 Hyper Combo Level 1
8007c5380001

P2 Hyper Combo Level 2
8007c5380002

P2 Hyper Combo Level 3
8007c5380003

P1 No Hyper Combo Gauge
8007c1260000
8007c1280000

P2 No Hyper Combo Gauge
8007c5360000
8007c5380000

Unlock Everything
500003E+11
8007b72cffff

P1 Partner Infinite Health
8007c9840090

P1 Partner 75% Health
d007c9840090
8007c984006C

P1 Partner 50% Health
d007c9840090
8007c9840048

P1 Partner 25% Health
d007c9840090
8007c9840024

P1 Partner 1 Hit Kill
d007c9840090

P1 Partner 1 Hit Kill
8007c9840001

P1 Partner Instant Death
8007c9840000

P2 Partner Infinite Health
8007cd8c0090

P2 Partner 75% Health
d007cd8c0090

P2 Partner 75% Health
8007cd8c006C

P2 Partner 50% Health
d007cd8c0090
8007cd8c0048

P2 Partner 25% Health
d007cd8c0090
8007cd8c0024

P2 Partner 1 Hit Kill
d007cd8c0090
8007cd8c0001

P2 Partner Instant Death
8007cd8c0000

P1 Infinite Special Partner Attacks
8007c17a0005

P1 No Special Partner Attacks
8007c17a0000

Road Rash: Jailbreak

Infinite Health
800d57665a5a

Infinite Bike Damage
800d577c4040

Always Win
800d577e016e

Infinite Nitro
300d81ec000a

All Weapons & Superweapons
800d81e401ff
800d81e8ffff
800d81eaffff

Stop Timer
800d5d480000

Nintendo 64

Asteroids Hyper 64

Infinite Lives
8007f90e0063

Infinite Points
8107f8feffff

Infinite Armageddon
8107f8920001

Infinite Numbered Items On Pickup
8107f8a2270f

Disney's Tarzan

Enable Code (Must Be On)
f1044f602400

99 Coins
810dd2300063

Infinite Health
811921c00120

Infinite Lives
800dd2520003

TARZAN and Sketch
810dd22400f0

Infinite Green Weapon
8.11921E+11

Infinite Red Weapon
8.11921E+11

Infinite Purple Weapon
8119209a0063

Mario Party 2

Enable Code (Must Be On)
f10add802400

Infinite Coins - Main Menu
810f8cd2ffff

Paperboy

Infinite Health
8006a5d20064

Ridge Racer 64

Enable All Cars
8102f19cffff

Enable All Cars
8102f19effff

Infinite Time
811269ca0700

Always Place 1st
8.10564E+11

All Tracks And All Trophies
81043530ffff
81043532ffff

Vigilante 8: 2nd Offense

Enable Code (Must Be On)
f117d5141000

Enable Code (Must Be On)
f117d9402400

Enable Extra Vehicles
8018f0f20002

Big Wheels Mode
8018f0f30001

No Gravity Mode
8018f0f30002

Big Wheels & No Gravity Mode
8018f0f30003

No Enemies (Arcade)
8018f0f30004

Invincible Mode
8018f0f30008

Invincible/No Gravity
8018f0f3000a

Square Makes a Deal with the Mouse

Disney Interactive and Square officially announced today that they have combined efforts to develop a 3D action game for the PlayStation 2... and guess who's directing the dang thing? That's right—Tetsuya Nomura, the creative mastermind behind Square's ever-popular *Final Fantasy* series.

"We believe Square's leadership in game development and Disney's unparalleled expertise in content creation will result in a cutting-edge title for PlayStation 2," said Tomoyuki Takechi, President of Square Co., Ltd. "We fully expect this product to appeal not only to the existing fans of Square and Disney games, but to cultivate new and broader audiences for both companies."

The game's set to be released in Japan at the end of 2001 and in North America and Europe in 2002.

First Details On New Tomb Raider Game!

An independent source has confirmed for GameFan that a brand-new *Tomb Raider* game, titled *Tomb Raider: The Movie,* will hit retailers just in time for Christmas. The game's set to follow the story of the upcoming Paramount Pictures film, and will be released for both the PC and home console systems.

Rare's Dino Planet

Reporting that Rare has a new, secret game in development is like writing the headline "Bill Gates Is Rich." Duh?!? Nintendo's trump card developer always has something secret up its sleeve—and as we near the next E3 (where Rare loves to reveal new titles), the buzz is building about what it might unveil this May. Work on *Perfect Dark*'s almost complete, and the *Donkey Kong* team obviously isn't just sitting around eating bananas; free time at Rare is, well, rare. So what's happening there across the ocean blue?

The mere mention of *Dino Planet* sent word scrambling across the 'net like blue-haired gamblers at a Vegas buffet: Rare's onto something huge. Early reports claim the game's an action/adventure hybrid, much like *Zelda.* A source within Nintendo informed GameFan that, while the *Zelda* comparison's a bit of a stretch, it's definitely not going to be a traditional 3D platformer like *Banjo* or *Donkey Kong 64.* Rare wants to strut its stuff yet again and show that they can create their own sub-genre—and we'll definitely giggle ourselves silly once we see it.

Now, Nintendo and Rare were quite vocal about their agreement with Disney Interactive last year, and for good reason. After all, if you're going to go after a license, why not go for the best? The first fruits of the deal came in *Mickey's Racing Adventure,* and now, we can rejoice in knowing *Mickey Speedway USA* will run victory laps on our N64s this holiday season. If you were anything like the rest of America, you took in a showing of "Toy Story 2" and caught a jaw-dropping preview for a new Disney flick entitled "Dinosaur." Will this film be source material for Rare's new dinosaur-themed game? Our source tells us, "No."

Now that the cat's poking its head out of the bag, expect Rare to 'pull a Rare' and say nothing about the title until E3, or beyond... though Rare usually can't help but take its much-deserved spotlight at major industry events. Remember how we all cooed over the first *Banjo,* only to have *Conker* and *Jet Force Gemini* unloaded on us the following day? One thing's for sure: Any effort Rare makes for the N64 is good news for console owners who feel left out in the cold after January's third-party fallout. As soon as Rare loosens its lips, we'll be there for the full scoop... hopefully, sooner than later.

News on Hot Konami PS2 Titles

According to a very well-placed source deep within Konami, we can now confirm for certain that Hideo Kojima's not only producing a game for the PS2 based on *The Matrix* sequels, but that *Metal Gear Solid 2*'s been in development for almost a year as well, and is now on track for an early 2001 release in Japan. The source also pointed out that a PS2 sequel to the spooky PlayStation horror game *Silent Hill* is in development at Konami of Japan. These sequels are obvious no-brainers, but it's nice to finally hear about these developments straight from the horse's mouth!

First Details on Worms Sequel Surface!

The *Worms* shall return! In an exclusive interview with Team 17, GameFan Online learned that the engrossing multi-player game *Worms* will indeed be making a return appearance sometime in the near future! Team 17 continued to hint at a possible Dreamcast sequel that'll feature online support, and may even be able to connect with PC users for a true global *Worms* experience!

PlayStation 2 Too Hot To Handle?

Sony's decided to change the Emotion Engine CPU from a 0.25 micron model to a 0.18 micron model by this fall. Changing the system's main CPU will make it more compact, more energy efficient, and will make the new PlayStation 2 systems generate less heat than the units that'll ship this March.

Nintendo Sheds Light on Game Boy Advance

Nintendo, the most tight-lipped company in the 'bidness,' has finally released a little extra information about its upcoming Game Boy Advance. Ken Lobb, Nintendo's Manager of Product Acquisition and Development, revealed in an interview with "GameWEEK" that the GBA will not be able to handle polygonal graphics as previously speculated.

"GBA won't be able to do true 3D polygonal graphics, but it will be able to do spectacular-looking 2D games with multiple layers of parallax scrolling, super-sharp graphics and absolutely none of the blurring effects that are seen in today's Game Boy games," states Lobb. Lobb also goes on to clarify the screen resolution: "Imagine SNES-quality resolution, only better, because GBA's games are displayed on a smaller screen."

The final design's not been released to the public yet, but Lobb does drop a nice little hint: "It's tiny. If you take the Game Boy Color and turn it horizontally, you'll get a good idea of its size." So apparently, the little bugger is indeed meant to be held like a Game Gear, as opposed to the classic Game Boy...

MP3 Coming to Dreamcast

Sega's formally announced what's been rumored for ages: A VM unit for the DC capable of playing MP3s will be released this year. The unit will feature a headphone jack to make up for the VM's tiny speaker size. No other details have been released, but it's expected that the unit will offer a lot more memory than the standard VM units already in distribution.

Shen Mue Chapter 2—In Chinese?

AM2 recently put up an employment listing for Cantonese experts, and it's since been rumored that the continuation of *Shen Mue* will be presented primarily in Cantonese (the game takes place in mainland China). Nothing's been confirmed on the matter yet, and it seems odd that a Japanese release would feature Cantonese dialogue... but we're talking about *Shen Mue* here, and anything's possible. Once we know either way, we'll inform you of the details. For now, just keep it in the back of your mind...

Treasure Box on Indefinite Hold

While in Japan covering the Square Millennium show, GameFan Magazine editor Eggo happened to stop in at Treasure. His stay was a brief one, but he did catch some news of the so-called classic game compilation *Treasure Box.* According to Treasure, the idea of such a compilation is still floating around the offices—but it's not something we'll see in the immediate future. The company failed to reveal what its current project is... Incidentally, after hearing the news that *Treasure Box* on the Dreamcast wouldn't happen anytime soon, Treasure-head Fury screamed like a schoolgirl, then fell to the ground, consumed by disappointment.

Tales Of The Hardcore



Last month I regaled both GameFan staffers and our readers alike with stories depicting a boy's unhealthy love for his pet cactus and a frightening example of ultimate purchasing insanity—Cerberus and his ridiculous $950 portable DVD player. This month, Fury did not rest... oh no! I scoured the streets (ok, so I maybe I just peered over my desk... ain't too hard to find some prime examples around these parts!) to find a few more cases of hardcore in motion. The first is perhaps one of the saddest incidences I've heard in recent memory. GF's own Kodomo has quite an assortment of overpriced anime collectibles at his desk. But one in particular, a $117 *Robotech* poster (yes, it's just paper), truly stands out. Most twisted however, is the fact that Kodomo recently traveled the streets of Hollywood in search for a new cave to rest his SD head. Now if you're sitting at home imagining what impressive digs the GF staffers inhabit, think again. A realistic apartment (one bedroom mind you) in Tinsel Town will realistically cost upward of $600 a month. Now realize, when I say realistic I'm speaking of a place that isn't cockroach infested, with corroded water pipes and some nice chalk outlines on the ground. Kodomo on the other hand, has vowed to find a dwelling ranging from $250-$300 per month max. Of course when it comes to lame anime trinkets, the sky's the limit. Good luck drooling over that poster when it's covered in silverfish, Kodomo...

Our second tale recalls GameFan's own resident Napoleon, ECM, and his ongoing, if not daily, waste of his hard earned paychecks. Now what's funniest about this little gem, is the fact that ECM is perhaps the king of completely outrageous and just plain stupid expenditures. From feeling the constant need to own EVERY action figure produced (can you say Power Puff Girls?) to a recent example where he found it impossible too wait a mere two weeks for a pre-purchased 36" Sony Vega, only to crack under the pressure and drop 400 big ones on a 20" 'tide me over Vega'... sick, just plain sick. But worst of all, ECM spent a whopping $400 on an import Nintendo 64DD. That's right, the fabled Bulky Drive was in fact released in Japan and to quote ECM: "Must own...must own NOW!!!! Needless to say, most every game scheduled for a DD release has found a new home as a cartridge... except *Mario Artist*. Now this fine product can sit idly by his 32X and sealed copy of Zelda and Link on CD-I.

Remember, you too can be immortalized as a hardcore legend... just offer up a tale similar to the ones mentioned above or a detailed account of super gaming skills at their best. And if you think beating *Chakan* on one man is hardcore... wait a sec, that is pretty crazy... that'll do just fine.

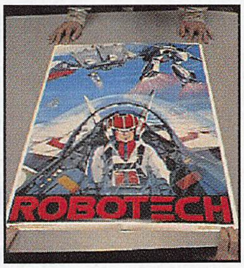
If you think you're hard-core enough to be featured in the hallowed pages of GF, here's the address to remember: ***fury@gamefan.com***, subject line "hardcore."

(Be sure to include jpegs of yourself and/or friends to accompany the stories. Makes it easier to laugh at you!)



$117.00 HARDCORE METER

SUBJECT: Matt Van Stone (aka Kodomo)
USELESS ITEM: *Robotech* wall poster
NUMBER OF USES: One. He looked at it, then rolled it back up and it's been on his shelf ever since.







$400.00 HARDCORE METER

SUBJECT: Eric Mylonas (aka ECM)
USELESS ITEM: Import Nintendo 64 DD
NUMBER OF USES: "Hey, that doesn't matter! You can't rush greatness!" (ECM referring, of course, to *Mario Artist*.)

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Everyone's talking about how wonderful the PlayStation 2 will be and how it's gonna revolutionize gaming, but if you think about it, the system won't be in many homes right away. Why? For starters, the price tag is incredibly steep. Buying an import PlayStation 2 on March 4th with a memory card and one game can cost you as much as $800. That's a lot more cash than most people have lying around... even if it does play DVDs. The U.S. PS2 will be cheaper, but it'll still be a lot more money than most people will be willing to spend.

Scott McClellan, Mission Designer, Zono, Inc. Born: 6.21.71 Alias/Secret Identity: Majestic138

My previous games include: *Red Alert* (PC), *Z* (PC), *NHL PowerPlay 96* and *98* (PSX, PC, Saturn), *Grand Slam* (PSX, PC, Saturn), *Subspace* (PC), *Circle of Blood* (PC), *Broken Sword* (PC), *Rally Championship* (PC), too many other Virgin Interactive games to name.....

My current Project is: *Metal Fatigue*

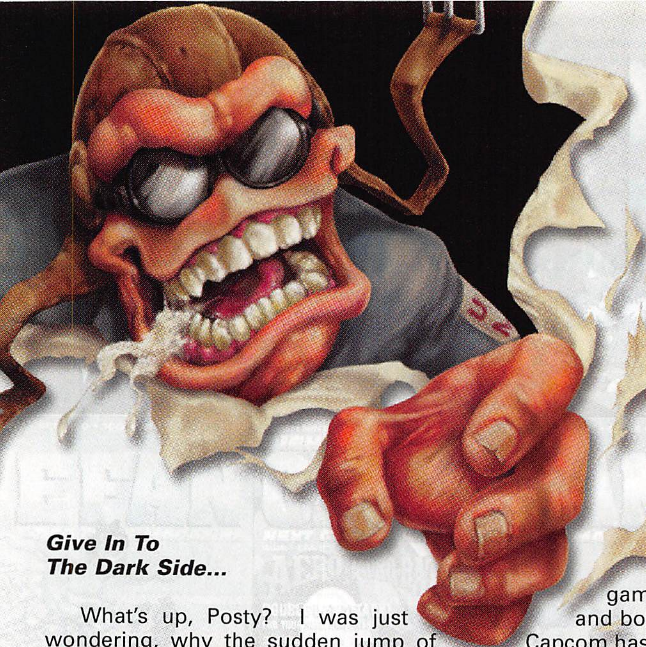
Hobbies: Writing, Art, Music, Ice Hockey, WWII History

Favorite games of all time: *Starflight* (PC), *Herzog Zwei* (Genesis), *Quake* (PC), Red Alert (PC), *Traveller* (RPG), *Axis and Allies* (Board Game)

Current favorite games: *Metal Fatigue* :), *NHL2000*, *Tony Hawk Pro Skater*, *Nox*

About me: I've been in the gaming industry for about 4 years, but have made games my entire life. I used to play hooky from elementary school and create various Role Playing and Board games to entertain myself and friends. I got my lucky break into the industry when I answered an ad in the paper for a test position at Virgin Interactive. I wrote that I enjoyed hockey on my resume and it just so happened Virgin was in production of a hockey title. After a couple years of getting my hopes up in test and the eventual demise of Virgin Interactive in the US, I went back to my previous career as a real estate appraiser. Just when I thought I'd be doing appraising full-time for the rest of my life, I found out about this job. And here I am again.





THE POSTMEISTER

Write to me, I'm running for president!!!
The Postmeister
6301 DeSoto Avenue Suite E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Give In To The Dark Side...

What's up, Posty? I was just wondering, why the sudden jump of *Resident Evil* from PlayStation to the Dreamcast? I bought my PlayStation for *Resident Evil 2* when it came out and bought both the first and second. Then shortly after, I bought the third. Now I hear that the fourth one is going to be for Dreamcast. My questions:

1) Did Capcom feel that PlayStation wasn't capable of handling *RE:CV*?
2) Is *RE:CV* going to come out for PlayStation?

You're the best and I wouldn't go anywhere else with these questions, so I hope you answer these questions. Did I mention that you are the best?

Anthony
Via the Internet

You can feel the evil coursing through your veins, can't you, Anthony? The evil permeates your every fiber, driving you to buy a PlayStation just so you can bathe in the murky waters of Capcom's blackest franchise. However, burning within every aspiring Post-Fu master, there is both Yin and Yang... and the good in you rebels against these dark desires, making you second-guess the purchase of yet another console. Do not resist your Yang, my friend... Code Veronica, *though it was developed by Sega on behalf of Capcom, is the tastiest* Resident Evil *title yet developed!*

Capcom has been one of the Dreamcast's staunchest supporters, thus far. It was no surprise that they would want to grace the console with a new Resident Evil *installment... especially with the incredible graphical muscle of Sega's powerhouse. But with the vast array of other titles Capcom's got in the works, the industry's "Sequel Kings" decided to loan their evil franchise to the developers at Sega for a DC-exclusive rendition. The result is clearly the best RE title yet created, and we were all very pleased to discover that there'll be even more where that came from (just wait till you see the sequel-ready ending to* Code Veronica*)!*

Capcom: The Spawn Of Evil...

Dear Posty,

I have played the new *Spawn* arcade game and I must say, it left me speechless! This has got to be the most visually impressive action/fighting game I've seen in a long time, and boy is it addictive! Once again, Capcom has saved our souls (can I get an Amen?). As a Dreamcast owner and hardcore gamer, I am dying to know when this incredible game is coming home. Any information you can give would be most helpful.

Darian Murphy
Chicago, Il.

Amazing... only the masterful gaming craftsmen at Capcom can overwhelm several consoles with the violent ballet of rotting, putrescent evil known as Resident Evil, *then turn around and save young Darian Murphy's immortal soul with yet another undead dance of destruction in their Spawn NAOMI game! It takes great skill to create games which both entice and frighten, yet Capcom seems to do it with otherworldly ease. The Postmeister tips his driving goggles to the masters of evil...*

Because Spawn was designed for NAOMI, it shouldn't take long for Capcom to slide this one over to the Dreamcast. However, Spawn is meant to be played with more than one person... and that means network support. Since Sega hasn't been real anxious to test their network capability, a home version of Spawn *seems a little less likely. Consider, too, that the Japanese version of the arcade game supports the Dreamcast VMU for game saves, while the US version does not. Could it be that only import fans will be visited by the hellspawn phenomenon comic fans know as Al Simmons? We shall see.*

Behold, The New "Classics"

Dear Postmeister,

I have here a few inquiries that the Sifu of the gaming world himself could answer better than anyone else, I think. Since I'm still a real last generation gamer, who has not bought another system since his Neo Geo cart in July '94, perhaps you could tell me what happened to *Chakan* for the Dreamcast. That was my second favorite game on the Genesis, and I was ecstatic when I saw the announcement on GFO about the DC sequel. But what's happened since then? Has there been any word on a *Nights* or *Guardian Heroes* game for the DC? I'm still considering getting a DC, but really won't bother without some particular games.

Well, the time has come for me to return to *Phantasy Star*, with my beloved Master System. My, how you polygon lovers are deprived of greatness. Phantasy Star Online? Ha! I've already got the best version (with the possible exception of the MegaDrive remake).

A long time Post-Fu student from the land of 2D,

Jonathan Crossley
Via the Internet

As the number of dedicated Post-Fu students grows, it seems not a day passes that many info-hungry students prostrate themselves before me in hopes of obtaining a mere morsel of my vast knowledge. Because you have braved the treacherous climb to meet me on the peaks of Postal wisdom, it saddens me to inform you that many of these beloved titles of ages long past will never see sequels that match the burning intensity of the originals. ECM has ultra-high hopes for Ed Anunziata's Chakan *sequel, and we're still hoping for the best with* Phantasy Star Online, *but there are a great many classics whose value as sequel-fodder has been greatly underestimated. All we can do is keep our fingers and toes crossed, and hope for the best.*

As one who hails from the land of 2D, one of the few, proud maniacs who sprang for the ultra-expensive Neo-Geo cartridge system lo these many years ago, you of all people should realize that the games which formed the rock-solid foundation upon which this great industry is built are quickly fading into memory, as more and more new gamers are raised loving the polygon, and not the benevolent sprite. These 3D games are the "new classics," and today's youngsters will be tomorrow's "old school" gamers, and they, too, will be begging for sequels to their favorite games... just as we do today. It's an endless cycle of addiction which every hard core gamers knows all too well. But though the games (and the industry itself) may change, you won't see this crew of ravenous gamers breaking the habit any time soon!

Online RPG's: Hazardous To Your Health?

Posty, I have a problem. A big problem.

You see, I used to be a Genesis and Super Nintendo freak. I had many games and devoted countless hours to them. But about two years ago, something dreadful happened. The release of *Ultima Online*. I have had to sell both my Saturn and Sony just to keep up with the monthly bill. I have

lost my knowledge and financial status in the video gaming world... all to one PC game. Yet I am not alone. This monster has sucked so many innocent gamers into its abyss. Is there anything in the console world you recommend that will distract me from the *Ultima Online* world? I'm so out of date.

Jason of Abnes
Via the Internet

There is very little in the world of games that can rescue those poor, lost souls who have found themselves sucked into the swirling maelstrom of "massively multi-player" online role-playing. EverQuest and Ultima Online are the two main pushers of this particular digital drug, and once a gamer has been snared by their wiles, it's nigh impossible to escape intact.

The danger, of course, is thinking you can fill the hole that has been left in your life once you give up these kinds of games. Having eliminated nearly every other form of entertainment from your gaming regimen, the closing of an UO or EQ account will reveal the complete and utter absence of anything resembling a life you may have had. The best cure I can recommend is one I would never recommend to a normal, well-adjusted student of Post-Fu whose gaming diet is well-rounded, but I feel it necessary to pass this secret on to you, and everyone who needs to kick the online role-playing habit...

Get a life! Reclaim that which was once yours. Venture into the sunlight during the day. After all, the sun is not merely the harbinger of daytime whose rising was once your signal to stop playing... it is the ball of burning gas which brings life to the world, and a tan to your skin! During the daytime hours, you will find real people doing the things you



Andy Madolora, a frequent art contributor from the sun-drenched beaches of Hawaii, delivers an angry-looking Knuckles. Down, boy...

believed only occurred online: They meet in designated social areas, shop, work, entertain... and even quest, on occasion! Before you can achieve the seventh level of Post-Fu mastery, you must first reach the first... and in order to do that, your life must be your own. Good luck – when I am elected president, the nation may be full of "online intervention" clinics which will help solve this very problem. I may be slightly behind in the polls, but my constituents are all too busy playing games to respond to some meaningless CNN presidential poll!

Can I Develop For The PlayStation 2?

Why won't anyone hear my cry? Is there going to be a PlayStation 2 version of the Net Yaroze? Is this so hard to answer? The silence is truly deafening.

Eldar
Via the Internet

Finally, we hear the plea of the rarest breed in video games... the homebrew developer! For those of you who don't already know, Sony appealed to the practicing code-slinger with their Net Yaroze, a "junior" PlayStation development kit which allowed aspiring programmers to write games that could be played on the specialized development station, or be distributed online to other Net Yaroze owners. It was the ideal way for inexperienced programmers to learn how game consoles work, and for experienced program writers to work on their own game concepts.

Unfortunately, Sony has not announced any such program for the PlayStation 2. That doesn't mean they won't, of course... but if they do, it's gonna be a while. Sony needs to provide their professional programmers with all the tools necessary to develop games before they gear up their enthusiast programmers. After all, there's not a lot of money in the Yaroze program, and when you consider how much each PlayStation 2 costs Sony to make, they need all the positive cash flow they can get.

The bottom line is, as soon as PlayStation 2 is heralded as a major success, and Sony is confident their financial bottom line is being met, they might start dedicating some time and energy into a new Yaroze program. Right now, however, they just want to get the launch right and get the standard console into homes...

No Import DOA2 for Dreamcast?

Since everybody else seems to be in a total state of confusion, I must ask the master of Post-Fu the burning question. Is there going to be a Japanese version of *Dead or Alive 2* on the Dreamcast? Not even my mighty Lightning Kick stance could uncover the truth, so I have come to the one and only Posty. What say you?

Chris
Via the Internet

I'm shocked and amazed! Even the mighty Lightning Kick stance could not reveal the information you seek? You must train harder, until your Lightning Kick is smooth to the bone... just like yours truly, the Great Kick of the North! On the peaks of gaming wisdom, I used the Post-Fu "Stomping Fist" technique to uncover the truth: Dead Or Alive 2 will be released for PlayStation 2 before it is released on Dreamcast in Japan, due to some wrangling



Steve White sends us his first piece of digital art, a cool interpretation of Gas-O from Bust-A-Move. Keep on bustin' there, Steve...

between Tecmo, Sega and Sony. It's a high-profile game, and deserves all the attention it's getting... but you should never, ever underestimate the power of politics in the world of video game publishing.

A Thin Line Between Practical and Cool...

Can you please answer this one for me? It's about the horizontal stand for the PS2. Why on earth is this thing (sold as an add-on) necessary? I understand why the vertical one is sold separately. However, if the horizontal orientation is the default mode for all video game systems anyway... why do I need a stand? Will it not lay on its side without the stand, or is it just a matter of style over substance?

John Dunn
Via the Internet

The running joke around the GameFan offices is the obvious one: Sony knows that gamers are so accustomed to tilting their PlayStation on its side just to keep audio and video from skipping, that they'd better build that "feature" into the PlayStation 2 for consistency's sake! Truth be told, though, it appears Sony's doing the whole "tower of power" configuration for effect, and not function—you'll be able to jack the PlayStation 2 into your entertainment center using the more traditional, horizontal posture, as well. If you think the thing looks groovy in your gaming rig standing on its side, you can pick up the stand and get as crazy as you wanna be... but it's all about choices, my friend. Sony doesn't just want to give you a game console. They want their sexy new hardware to help "accessorize" the entertainment center of the 21st-century gamer.

Personally, I'm just afraid people will be trying to install the thing in their cars as a stereo amplifier...

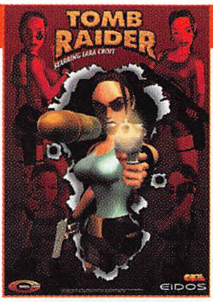
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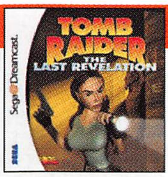
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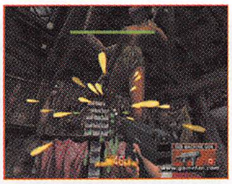
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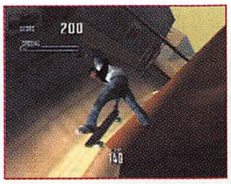
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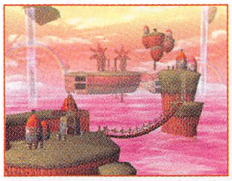




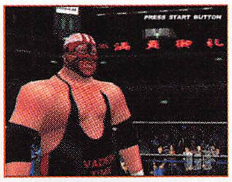
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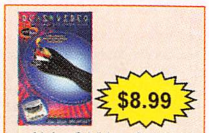
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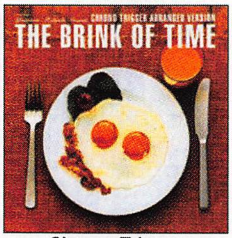
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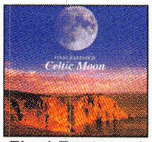
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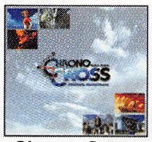
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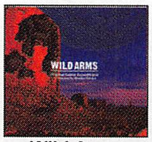
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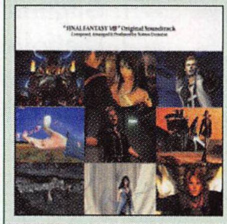


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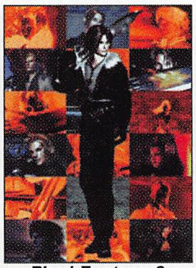

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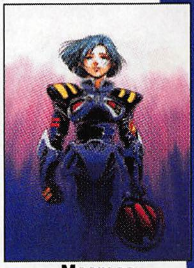

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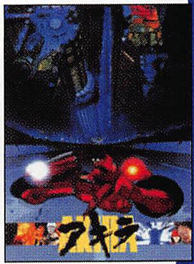

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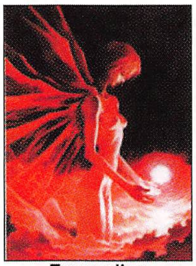

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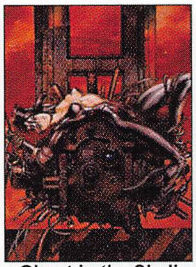

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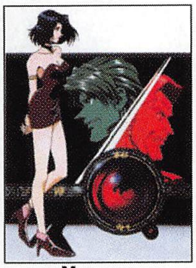

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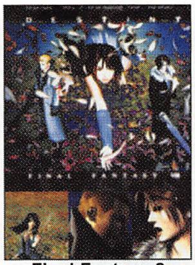

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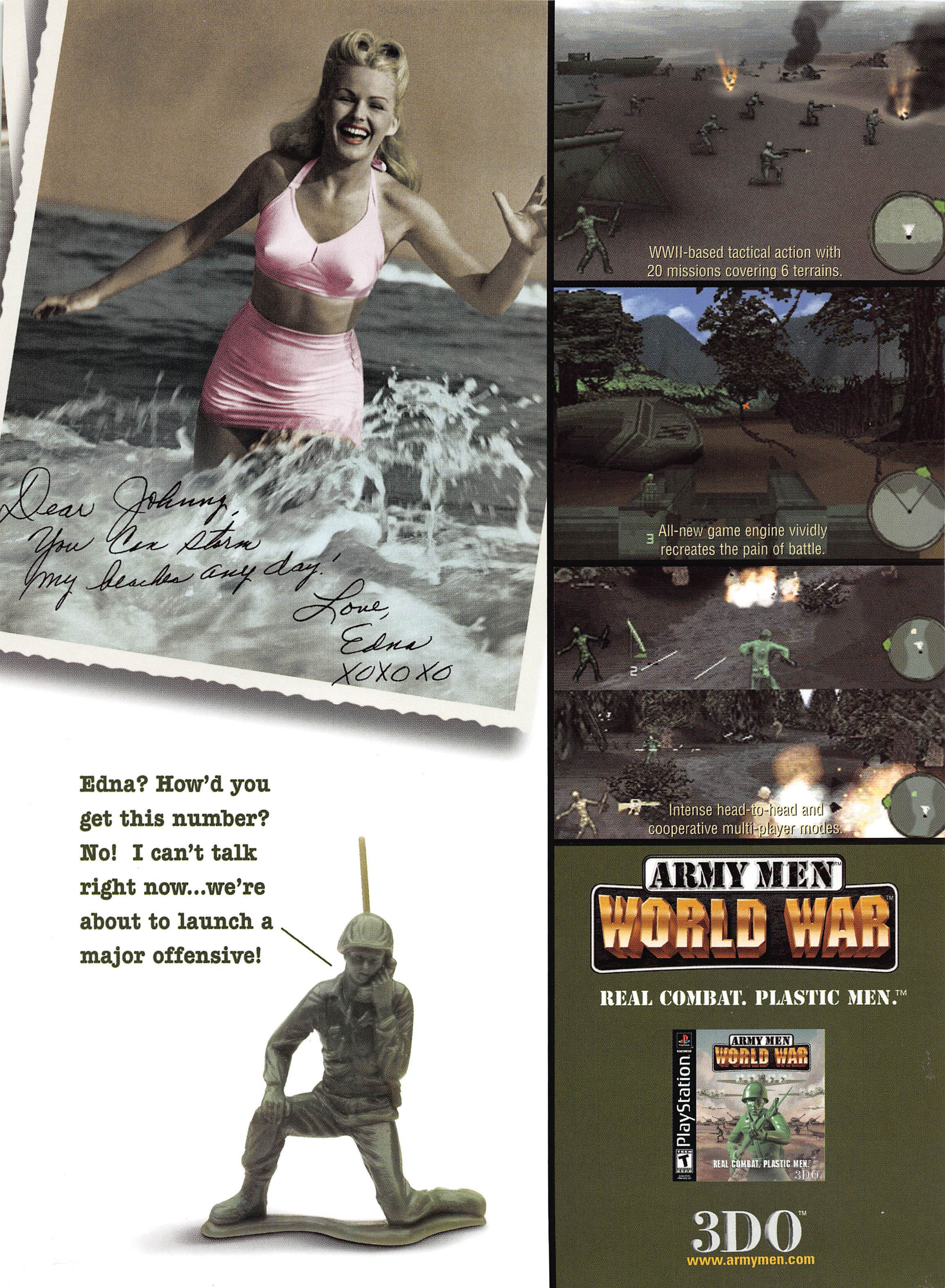

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Johnny,
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plastic fantastic!
Call me...
Love, Agnes
FOLLOW-UP TO
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WINNING
ARMY MEN™ 3D
TEEN
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Animated Violence
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